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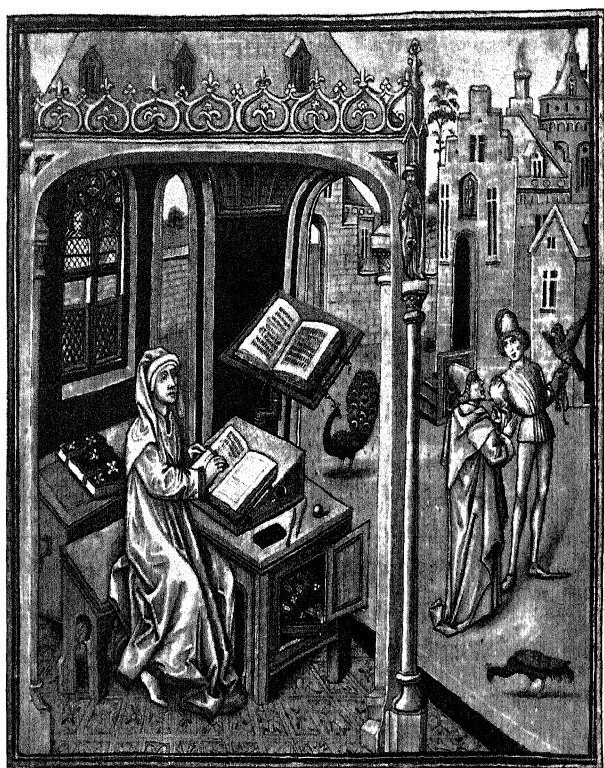


THE GOLDEN LEGEND  
*of Jacobus de Voragine*

PART ONE







*Plate I*

*The*  
GOLDEN LEGEND

*of Jacobus de Voragine*

TRANSLATED AND ADAPTED FROM THE LATIN  
BY GRANGER RYAN AND HELMUT RIPPERGER

PART ONE



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THE GOLDEN LEGEND

PART ONE

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## FOREWORD

*'I have submysed myself to translate into englysshe the legende of sayntes, which is callyd legenda aurea in latyn, that is to say the golden legende. For in lyke wyse as gold is moste noble above ol other metalles, in lyke wyse is thys legende holden moost noble above al other werkys.'* — William Caxton, in the foreword to his translation of the *Golden Legend*, published in 1483.

Jacobus de Voragine was born in Varaggio, or Varazze, a little town on the coast of the Gulf of Genoa, a few miles from Savona. The date of his birth is not known exactly, but it must have been between 1228 and 1230. All that is known of his parentage is that his father was 'a man of low degree, who had a small piece of land.' In 1244 Jacobus entered the Order of Preachers. He soon became known for his sanctity and his learning, and was appointed to teach Theology and Sacred Scripture in several houses of his Order in Northern Italy. As a preacher and spiritual guide, he was beloved for his wisdom and his gentleness.

In 1267, Jacobus was elected provincial of the Dominican province of Lombardy, an office which he fulfilled for nearly twenty years. Then, in 1287, he was made *definitor* of the province. In 1288 Pope Nicholas IV commissioned him to free the Genoese from the ban of the Church. In the same year, at the death of the Archbishop Charles Bernard, the Chapter of Genoa elected him archbishop; but Jacobus refused to accept the proffered dignity, and the office was given to Obizzo Fieschi, the Patriarch of Antioch, whom the Moslems had driven from his see. Four years later, however, Obizzo died, and this time the clergy, the Senate, and the people of Genoa persuaded Jacobus to become their archbishop. He went to Rome to be consecrated by Nicholas IV himself; but shortly after his arrival in Rome the pope died, and Jacobus, in haste to be at his duties, was consecrated by the Bishop of Ostia, and returned to his diocese.

Genoa at that time was at the height of her glory. She had conquered Pisa a few years before, and her fleets ruled the Western Mediterranean. Her commerce extended to Constantinople, the Black

Sea, and the cities of the Levant. She had not yet embarked on the long war with Venice which was to be her undoing. Yet within her walls there was no peace. The conflict between the Guelfs and the Ghibellines, which raged in most of the North Italian cities during this period, set her citizens one against the other in an unending campaign of murder and destruction. Like a fire that would not be put out, warfare swirled through her streets, and swept up the narrow *vici* that led to the lovely cathedral of San Lorenzo.

Such a state of disorder and bloodshed was intolerable to the new archbishop. Undismayed by the fact that it had existed for sixty years, and had become a sort of civic institution of which the citizens themselves were proud, he set himself to the task of bringing peace out of discord. His efforts were so fruitful that early in 1295 the rival factions agreed to put an end to their differences — or, to use Jacobus' own words, 'they swore to form a single society, a single brotherhood, a single body.' The archbishop's joy at this event was short-lived, however, because within a year the hostile parties were again at swords' points.

Another side of Jacobus' episcopate, however, left an ineffaceable mark in the memory of his people. The chroniclers describe him as the 'father of the poor.' He lived the life of a poor man, and spent the large revenues of his office in caring for the needy, going about and ministering to their spiritual and bodily wants from morning to night. 'His charity was inexhaustible. The luxury of almsgiving was the only one which he permitted himself.' Thus he followed the example of the great bishops, Saint Basil, Saint John Chrysostom, Saint Hilary, and many others, whose lives he had written lovingly, and as lovingly imitated.

Jacobus died July 13, 1298, and was buried in the church of Saint Dominic in Genoa, where he had lived and laboured in former years. It was not long before he began to be venerated as a saint, and invoked as 'the peace-maker.' More than one town in northern Italy elected him as its heavenly patron, including his native Varazze, where his statue still stands on the façade of the town hall, watching over the *Piazza del Municipio*. He was beatified by Pope Pius VII in 1816, and the same [redacted] Dominican Order, and the people of Genoa and Savona, to celebrate his feast as that of a saint.

Jacobus was the author of a considerable number of works, erudite in content and rather undistinguished in style. Among them is a

commentary on Saint Augustine, a large collection of sermons, an important Chronicle of Genoa, and various smaller writings. But in compiling the *Golden Legend*, he produced one of the most famous books of the Middle Ages. Emile Mâle counts it among the ten books from which we could form an adequate idea of medieval thought and knowledge. Jacobus did not give the work its present name: he called it *Legenda Sanctorum*, the Legend of the Saints. Its popular reception was so enthusiastic, however, that it soon came to be known as the *Golden Legend*, a title for which we have already quoted Caxton's explanation. From the fact that there are over five hundred manuscript copies of the book in existence, and that within the first hundred years of printing it appeared in more than one hundred and fifty editions and translations, it is obvious that the *Legend* was in extremely wide demand.

The critical and sceptical scholarship of the Renaissance, and the attacks of the Reformers, put a sudden end to the popularity of the *Legend*. The scholars condemned its style as barbaric, and its contents as implausible, superstitious, even immoral. They likewise attacked Jacobus himself, deeming him '*homo ferrei oris et plumbei cordis*,' a man with an iron mouth and a leaden heart. The phrase is found in Melchior Cano's *De Locis Theologicis*, but it has been traced to Vivès, and Pierce Butler suspects that the thought, if not the words, may go back to Erasmus, who could treat as fools 'those who love to hear or tell feign'd Miracles and strange lyes, and are never weary of any Tale, though never so long, so it be of Ghosts, Spirits, Goblins, Devils, or the like; which the farther they are from the truth, the more readily they are believ'd and the more do they tickle their itching ears.' At any rate, the unkind witticism was repeated from generation to generation, and the result was that the *Legend* fell into disrepute, and apparently into oblivion. Its career in English is fairly typical. It was translated about 1450, by a writer now unknown. Caxton translated it again, using the older English version and a French translation, with little or no reference to the Latin original; he printed and published his text in 1483. The Caxton version was subsequently printed several times by Wynkyn de Worde. Then it remained untouched until William Morris printed and published a limited edition of the Caxton text in 1892. No doubt the revival of interest in the *Legend* in the last half century, slight as it seems to have been, was due to the grad-

ual abandonment of the Renaissance estimate of the Middle Ages, and the awakening of a more sympathetic attitude toward medieval writings. The issue, however, is clear enough; and some explanation of the nature and purpose of the *Golden Legend* may serve not only to explain the diversity of the judgments which we have noted, but also to show why it has seemed worth while to retranslate and republish it in a modern and easily available edition at this time.

To Jacobus himself, the title *Legenda Sanctorum* probably meant no more than 'Readings in the Lives of the Saints.' *Legenda* does not mean myth, or fable: in medieval usage, the word is equivalent to *lectio*, and means 'lesson,' or 'reading.' The Lectionaries were books containing accounts of the lives and works of the saints, to be read as their feasts recurred during the year: but these 'legends' were known chiefly to clerks. According to Emile Mâle, Jacobus simply popularized the Lectionary, preserving even its sequence. The Abbé Roze adds to this that in essence the *Golden Legend* 'is the explanation of the offices celebrated in the ecclesiastical year. Since the feasts of the saints occur in greater number than the other solemnities of the Church, the lives of the saints occupy the greater part of the book.' The *Legenda* was therefore compiled as a sort of layman's lectionary. This intention of the author is clear from the plan of the book. He divides the year into four parts, corresponding to the four phases of the spiritual history of mankind. His first chapter explains this division elaborately, and there are references to it at the beginning of each of the four periods of the year. Furthermore, some of the longest chapters in the work deal with the mysteries of Our Lord's life and mission, or with the seasonal practises of the Church. These chapters are particularly interesting as examples of scholastic method; and they present a finely etched picture of the universe of spirits and men and beasts and inanimate creatures as the medieval man saw it, created, ordered, and ruled by the providence of God, and serving with intricate and marvellous precision the end for which it was made, the salvation of the human race. All things are related and directed to this end, so that the wood of the Tree whence Adam ate becomes the wood of the Cross, and Christ reaches out His hand to Adam in Limbo, and says, *Peace to thee and to all the just among thy sons!* No being, and no event, is without its place and meaning in this plan; all is explained in the

Scriptures, or can be deduced from them. Thus, as Mâle says, 'the real history of the world is the history of the City of God.'

Of this history the saints are the true heroes. Their lives and acts were far more interesting to the medieval folk than the wars and conquests of kings. Indeed, even in such a work as the *Mirror of History* of Vincent of Beauvais, which purported to be a record of secular events, the real subject is 'the story of the saints who were contemporaries of these kings and emperors. His heroes are abbots, anchorites, young shepherdesses, beggars. The translation of relics, the founding of some monastery, the healing of a demoniac, the retreat of a hermit to the desert, are to him the most important facts in the history of the world.' The saints' feast days were also the popular calendars:

*A la Saint-Barnabé  
Sème ton orge;  
A la Saint-Marc  
C'est trop tard:  
A la Saint-Barnabé  
La faux au pré,  
A la Saint-Léu  
La lampe au cleu*

runs an old French proverb. In every momentous event of his life, in every need, for the curing of his ills and the fruitfulness of his land and the weal of his beasts, the medieval Everyman turned to some special saint for aid. Saint Margaret protected his wife in childbirth, Saint Genevieve cured the burning sickness, Saint Blaise the ills of the throat. Saint Cornelius guarded his oxen, Saint Gall his hens, Saint Médard his vines. 'The lore of the saints,' says Mâle, 'was the only learning.' It was this lore that Jacobus set down in his book, searching out the legends of the saints in the older authors, compiling and codifying them with diligent sincerity, telling them over with a gracious simplicity that would not tax the understanding of the humble folk, the *sancta plebs Dei*.

It is by studying the stories of the saints that we can reach a clearer understanding of the nature of the legend, and the characteristics which distinguish it from scientific biography; for not only Jacobus'

stories, but the sources from which he drew, were legendary in character. No one has written of this question with greater prudence and precision than the Bollandist, Père Delehaye. He points out that the curious thing about legends, hagiographical or otherwise, is that behind the ultimate author who puts them down in writing, there is a hidden 'author,' anonymous and manifold, whose memory stretches back through generations: this 'author' is the masses, the people themselves. The true matter of the legend is fashioned by the mind and soul of the people, and added to, or even at times substituted for, what is authentically known of the saints. The legends of the saints show us not so much the particular personalities and deeds of a certain number of individuals, as the ideals of the people from whose heart the legends sprang. All heroes are legendary: they personify the aims and dreams of the masses who worship them. The saints are the heroes of the medieval folk. They had their secular heroes, of course — Constantine and Charlemagne and Roland and many another — yet even these borrowed, in the legends, some of the qualities of sainthood. The legends of the saints contain the medieval idea in its fulness. The saint is the truly perfect man. He must have all the virtues, and be free of every fault. His wisdom must be such as exceeds human powers. He must work all imaginable wonders, outdo the greatest magicians in magic, conquer the power of the Devil himself. He must be the master of Nature, able to dominate the fiercest beasts, and to command the winds and the sea. The direst torments cannot daunt him, the most puissant princes are unable to dismay him. Whether the saints are men or women, strong or feeble, of mature age or infants in arms, they still speak, reason, argue, act, and conquer death with the power of God, and no power under God can overcome them. 'In this picture,' writes Delehaye, 'the friends of God appear to us as the greatest beings on earth; beings raised above matter and the miseries of humanity. Kings and princes revere them, consult them, and mingle with the people to kiss their relics and implore their protection. Even on earth they live in the familiar friendship of God, and together with His consolations God imparts to them something of His power; but they use it only for the good of mankind, and to them men have recourse in order to be delivered of all evils of soul and body. The saints practise all the virtues in a superhuman way — meekness, mercy, forgiveness of injuries, mortification, self-

denial — and they make these virtues lovable, and invite Christians to practise them.'

Since the hagiographical legends are in reality the folk-lore of the saints, it is easy to understand many of their peculiarities, as we discover them in the *Golden Legend*. In general, the saints as here portrayed possess little individuality. They are types, who exemplify all that God commands and counsels, and that the people hold worthy of admiration. Similarly, the same things happen to one saint after another. If they are martyrs, each of them must face and surmount the worst tortures that the ingenuity of their persecutors can invent. Furthermore, since the medieval Christian could probably think of no more agreeable pastime than mocking and discomfiting the enemies of the Faith, we find the martyrs, time after time, outwitting the emperors and prefects who torture them, until more than once they exclaim, like Dacian in the legend of Saint Vincent, 'Alas, he has conquered us!' If the saints are confessors, their holiness is without blemish, their good works without stint, their miracles without number; and their power is always at the service of their fellow men. If they are virgins, their purity is as intrepid as it is lovely. No ruse of Satan can beguile them, no tyrant can diminish their integrity. If they are children, like Pancratius, or Quiricus the infant son of Julitta, it is no surprise to hear them speak and reason and confound the enemy as easily as their elders do. Moreover, throughout their lives the saints have the constant and familiar assistance of the heavenly spirits and the saints who went before them. The angels are on every page of the *Golden Legend*, because they were so much in the thoughts of the people. They are particularly to be relied upon when the Devil makes his appearance, and the Devil is everywhere, the author of every ill, great or small, that befalls a saint. And how his readers must have relished Jacobus' stories of the Devil! Everywhere he works his malign wiles, and everywhere he is vanquished by the saints and the angels. He is made to appear not only powerless, but foolish: and he acknowledges and even explains his defeat, in conversations that often have a special piquancy, as in the legend of Saint Juliana, or in that of Saint Margaret. The human villains of these dramas fare no better. The story of Pilate in the legend of the Passion, or that of Judas, in the legend of Saint Matthias' paint the picture of villainy in the most lurid medieval colours. Nero and Decius and Diocletian and Julian

the Apostate are the very personifications of evil — sons of the Devil, the saints often call them. No insult is too strong, no horror-story too improbable, no vice too odious, to be told of them.

Considering the popular origin of so much of their material, it should be clear that we must not expect of Jacobus, or of the authors of the sources upon which he drew, the scientific attitude of historians. Had Jacobus been equal to the best historians of his time, he still would not have approximated the accuracy of modern historical science, because that science, with all its complex devices for determining facts and criticizing documents, did not yet exist. History, at least until the fifteenth century, was considered a branch of Rhetoric, 'in which,' says Cicero, 'a region is described or a battle narrated in ornate language, and speeches and harangues are inserted.' He adds that 'it is permitted to rhetors to falsify somewhat in their histories, in order to make their point more forcibly.' History had not advanced appreciably as a science between Cicero's time and the thirteenth century. But the main point here is that Jacobus and the other hagiographers were not historians. Their writings were aimed at the hearts of their readers rather than at their minds. Their purpose was less to make known to the people what the saints had been, than to show the people what they should be in order to be saints. In other words, they were presenting the ideal of the Gospel in the most concrete possible form, to an audience much more capable of understanding a graphic narrative than of grasping an abstract ethical disquisition.

This does not mean, of course, that Jacobus deliberately falsified history. In the first place, he was a man of his time, and believed what the men of his time found so easy to believe. He certainly wrote nothing that he did not believe, either as fact or as symbol; and when he had any serious doubts of the veracity of his narrative, he said so plainly. The greatest difference between his attitude of mind and ours is, perhaps, that if a miracle took place before our eyes, we still should require a thousand proofs that it was not the result of unseen or unknown natural forces, whereas the mere fact that it *seemed* miraculous would go far to prove to Jacobus, or to most of the men of his era, that it *was* a miracle. In the second place, Jacobus was not unaware of the need of distinguishing between good authorities and bad: according to Bollandus, he was 'not only a savant and a saint, but he was endowed with remarkable prudence and



judgement, and was more capable than Vivès and Erasmus of discerning what was worthy of approval in his writings.' More than once he points out that the source from which he takes his story is dubious or worse. But this does not in the least deter him from telling his story at length, or from preferring a marvellous apocryphal account to a humdrum authentic one, or to none at all — always provided that the narrative conveys and enlivens some salutary lesson. For his purpose, the impact of the story on the minds of his hearers is of much greater importance than historical accuracy.

These facts may suffice to spare us astonishment at some of Jacobus' errors and inconsistencies, both geographical and chronological. That there was no King of France when the 'son of the King of France' was held hostage at the court of Tiberius would not have disturbed Jacobus, and need not disturb us. We may also be prepared to find complete legends, circumstanced with all the customary details, for some saints of whom nothing authentic is known, or even for a few who never lived at all. Of the latter sort, the classic example is the legend of Saints Barlaam and Josaphat, which, if the conclusions of later research is correct, is a Christian version of the Buddha legend. We do not mean to imply that the *Golden Legend* is a collection of fictional characters and narrations, because that is not true, however difficult it would be to determine, at this distance, exactly what proportions of historical fact and popular idealization are contained in each legend. But we trust that it is now clear that the problem itself is of minor importance, because the question of 'historical' truth was, in Jacobus' work, secondary to the higher purpose of moral instruction and Christian inspiration. As in the lovely story of Barlaam and Josaphat, so in all these legends, the characters depicted are not merely individuals who lived, died, and went to Heaven; they are Christian Virtue personified, and their chief role is to encourage others to model their lives on the undying ideals of Christianity. As Delehaye says, 'their lives are the concrete realization of the spirit of the Gospel; and by the very fact that it makes this sublime ideal real and tangible, the legend, like all poetry, can claim a degree of truth higher than that of history.'

Besides absolving Jacobus of the scholarly strictures of his Renaissance critics, these reflexions on the nature and purpose of his work should suffice to explain the popularity of the *Golden Legend* in the late Middle Ages. In it the wordless yearnings of our medieval

forbears found a voice, and so it spoke to their hearts, enlightening, consoling, and uplifting them. But they also discovered their outer world in the *Legend*. The *décor* of the book is the medieval scene itself — the world of knights and serfs and busy burghers and war and poverty and beauty and faith. The reader of that time found in the golden pages the same people with whom he rubbed elbows in shop and market place and church. 'In that great company deemed worthy to sit at the right hand of God,' says Mâle, 'there were shepherds, cattle-drovers, carters, serving men of all kinds; and the lives of these humble Christians showed the seriousness and depth of which all human life is capable.' It was the peculiar genius of the Middle Ages to represent the people and the events of all ages as contemporary with themselves; and this explains the close relationship between the *Golden Legend* and medieval art. Take the folk drama, for instance — the mystery plays and the later moralities. They are the embodiment, the dramatic portrayal, of many of the legends which we read in Jacobus. The story of the Nativity, for example, or that of the Epiphany, or especially that of the Resurrection, contain complete scenarios for mystery plays — plot, action, characters, lines, and settings. Ernest Rhys remarks that when the English medieval smith or carpenter, cobbler or bowyer, turned playgoer at Whitsuntide, he assisted at a play which expressed himself as well as its scriptural folk; and the remark fits the *Legend* equally well. In both forms of art the personages, the scenes, the speech, even the humour, are medieval; in both, the spirit and the lesson are enduringly Christian. As much could be said of the kinship between the *Legend* and the cathedrals and churches of medieval Europe, which in glass and stone told the story of the world and man and eternity to the people. 'To the Middle Ages art was didactic,' writes Mâle. 'All that it was necessary that men should know — the history of the world from the creation, the dogmas of religion, the examples of the saints, the hierarchy of the virtues, the range of the sciences, arts, and crafts — all these were taught them by the windows of the church or by the statues in the porch. . . Through the medium of art the highest conceptions of theologian and scholar penetrated to some extent the minds of even the humblest of the people.' To convey so rich and varied a message, medieval art was of necessity inspirited with a complex symbolism. Mâle himself states that the *Golden Legend* is one of the indispensable keys to that symbolism —

indispensable, that is, to us. To the men who fashioned the thousands of panels and medallions and statues, and to the men for whom they were fashioned, what must have been the charm and the inspiration of a book which told the same story in simple words and lively images? Caxton says, in his foreword, that he translated the *Legend* 'to lete to be understonden to suche peple as been not letterd, the natyuytees, the lyves, the passyons, the myracles, and the dethe of the holy sayntes, & also somme other notorye dedes and actes of tymes passed.' Jacobus' intention in writing the *Legend* was not different; and the strongest appeal of his work must have been that he gave to the people, in a fresh and gracious form, so much that they already knew and cherished.

A word about the 'etymologies' which preface most of the legends of the saints, and which Graesse calls 'those most perverse etymologies, in which more than anywhere else our Jacobus limps.' So perverse are they that some translators have simply omitted them. One gives as his reason that they are incomprehensible, another wishes to spare the worthy author the laughter which they would evoke. We have translated them despite the obscurity of many of them, and we have found nothing laughable about them. They certainly are not scientific etymologies, but they were as certainly not meant to be. In fact, they are admirable examples of the whole method of Jacobus. Roze says of them, in the foreword of his excellent French translation, that 'you would think you were reading a horoscope,' and this is true. To Jacobus, a name is the symbol of the person who bears it, and in its letters and syllables can be found the indication of what the person's life is to be, and his virtues, and his triumphs. So he dissolves the compound of the name, so to speak, into its component elements; and he shows, frequently by recourse to Greek, of which he obviously knew little, and at times to Hebrew, of which he knew less, what the name meant when by the providence of God it was conferred on the saint. But we do not think that he offered these etymologies as scientific derivations. Take, as one clear example, the etymology which precedes the legend of Mary Magdalen. A paragraph is devoted to the symbolism of the name Magdalen: 'it means remaining in guilt, or armed, or unconquered, or magnificent. . . .' Then he goes on to apply each of these meanings to Mary herself. But in the very next paragraph, having disposed of the symbolism, which is the really important aspect of the name, he says, '(the town of)

Magdala belonged to Mary, who thus came by the surname of Magdalen.' As with facts and dates and places, therefore, so also with names — it is the hidden meaning which must be sought, and the spiritual message which things convey. It has seemed to us, therefore, that to omit the etymologies would be to deprive the reader of a significant and flavourful element of the *Legend*.

As to the actual translation which is here offered, it is based on the Latin edition of Graesse, published in Leipzig in 1850. It is usually acknowledged to be the best available text; but we are not the first to discover its numerous faults of detail, and we have not hesitated to follow other editions — either manuscripts or early printed versions — in making omissions and changes. Moreover, we have omitted the entire appendix given by Graesse, containing 'certain legends superadded by others.' In this process there was no certain guide, because there is at present no definitive edition of the *Legend*, and we make no pretense of having established one. Furthermore, while we have consulted modern French and German translations of the *Legend*, we have made no use whatever of previous English versions. If we have sought to give some flavour of antiquity to a modern translation, we have had no wish to modernize an old one. Nor have we attempted to give literary 'style' to a work which is almost completely devoid of it in the original. In fact, the whole aim of this translation has been to make the *Legend* available in an accessible and easily readable form. Thus we offer it as an adaptation, although deletions are few, and changes in the text still fewer. Most of the omissions have been long and highly involved theological passages, which we felt rather encumbered than enhanced the book as a whole, at least so far as the average reader is concerned. Occasionally, too, we have eliminated passages in which repetitions were multiplied and re-multiplied, or where the stories told would have offended rather than inspired the reader of today. For all this we have no ultimate authority save our own judgement: but we feel confident that we have nowhere betrayed the spirit and intent of a book which prolonged study and diligent labour have taught us to love.

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# THE GOLDEN LEGEND

## PROLOGUE

### THE DIVISIONS OF THE YEAR

Here begins the Book of the Legends of the Saints collected by Brother Jacobus of Genoa, of the Order of Preachers.

The whole of this fugitive life is divided into four periods: the period of erring, or wandering from the way; the period of renewal, or returning to the right way; the period of reconciliation; and the period of pilgrimage. The period of erring began with Adam and lasted until Moses, for it was Adam who first turned from God's way. And this first period is represented, in the Church, by the part of the year which runs from Septuagesima to Easter. During this part of the year the Book of Genesis is recited, this being the Book which contains the account of the sin of our first parents. The period of renewal began with Moses and lasted until the birth of Christ, for this is the period during which man was renewed and called back to the faith through the mouth of the Prophets. It is represented, in the Church, by the part of the year which runs from Advent until Christmas. Isaias is then recited, because he revealed this divine renewal most clearly. The period of reconciliation is that in which Christ, through the merits of His life and death, reconciled us with God the Father. It is represented, in the Church, by the part of the year from Easter to Pentecost. The Apocalypse is read, for the mystery of this reconciliation is revealed therein in symbols and visions. Finally, the period of pilgrimage is that of our present life, in which we wander as pilgrims amidst a thousand obstacles. It is represented, in the Church, by the part of the year between the Octave of Pentecost and Advent; and the Books of Kings and Maccabees are recited, wherein are set forth many wars, to symbolize the spiritual struggle which we must undertake. As for the part of the year between Christmas and Septuagesima, it is divided into two parts. The first is within the period

of reconciliation and is a time of rejoicing, which lasts from Christmas to the Octave of the Epiphany; the other is within the period of pilgrimage and is a time of sadness, which lasts from the Octave of the Epiphany to Septuagesima.

These four divisions of the spiritual life are comparable to the four parts of the natural year, so that the first is the Winter, the second the Spring, the third the Summer, and the fourth the Autumn, and the meaning of this comparison is apparent. Another comparison may be made with the times of the day, so that the first spiritual period is like the Night, the next like the Morning, the third like Noon, and the fourth like Evening.

But although the time of erring preceded the time of renewal, the Church prefers to begin its year with Advent, and not with Septuagesima, and this for two reasons: because, due to the fact that this is the time of the renewal, the Church then turns back to the beginning of her offices; and because, by beginning with the time of the transgression, she would seem to begin with error. Therefore she does not hold strictly to the order of time, just as the Evangelists frequently do not follow it in their accounts of the life of the Lord. Then too, with the advent of the Lord everything is renewed, and that is why this period is called the time of renewal.

We shall then follow this division of the four parts of the year in undertaking the study of the various feasts, and begin this Book with Advent, which opens the period of renewal.

## THE SPIRITUAL ADVENT AND THE RETURN OF THE LORD

Advent is celebrated for four weeks, to signify that this coming of the Lord is fourfold; namely, that He came to us in the flesh, that He came with mercy into our hearts, that He came to us in death, and that He will come to us again at the Last Judgement. The last week is seldom finished, to denote that the glory of the elect, as they will receive it at the last advent of the Lord, will have no end. But while the coming is in reality fourfold, the Church is especially concerned with two of its forms, namely with the coming in the flesh and with the coming at the Last Judgement. Thus the Advent fast is both a joyous fast, and a fast of penance. It is a joyous fast because it recalls the advent of the Lord in the flesh;

and it is a fast of penance in anticipation of the advent of the Last Judgement.

With regard to the advent in the flesh, three things should be considered: its timeliness, its necessity, and its usefulness. Its timeliness is due first to the fact that man, condemned by his nature to an imperfect knowledge of God, had fallen into the worst errors of idolatry, and was forced to cry out, 'Enlighten my eyes.' Secondly, the Lord came in the 'fulness of time,' as Saint Paul says in the Epistle to the Galatians. Thirdly, He came at a time when the whole world was ailing, as Saint Augustine says: 'The great physician came at a moment when the entire world lay like a great invalid.' That is why the Church, in the seven antiphons which are sung before the Feast of the Nativity, recalls the variety of our ills and the timeliness of the divine remedy. Before the coming of God in the flesh, we were ignorant, subject to eternal punishment, slaves of the Devil, shackled with sinful habits, lost in darkness, exiled from our true country. Hence the ancient antiphons announce Jesus in turn as our Teacher, our Redeemer, our Liberator, our Guide, our Enlightener, and our Saviour.

As to the usefulness of Christ's coming, different authorities define it differently. Our Lord Himself, in the Gospel of Saint Luke, tells us that He came for seven reasons: to console the poor, to heal the afflicted, to free the captives, to enlighten the ignorant, to pardon sinners, to redeem the human race, and to reward everyone according to his merits. And Saint Bernard says 'We suffer from a three-fold sickness: we are easily misled, weak in action, and feeble in resistance. Consequently the coming of the Lord is necessary, first to enlighten our blindness, second to succour our weakness, and third to shield our fragility.'

As regards the second advent, at the time of the Last Judgement, we must consider in turn the circumstances which will precede it, and those that will accompany it.

The circumstances which will precede the Last Judgement are of three kinds: fearful signs, the imposture of the Antichrist, and a great fire. The signs which are to come before the Last Judgement are five; for Saint Luke says: 'There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, by reason of the confusion of the roaring of the sea and of the waves.' All these things are explained in the Book of the Apocalypse.

Saint Jerome, on the other hand, has discovered, in the Annals of the Hebrews, fifteen signs which are to come before the Last Judgement:

On the first day, the sea will rise forty cubits higher than the mountains, and will rear up as a solid wall.

On the second day, it will sink so far that it will be barely visible.

On the third day, the monsters of the deep will appear on the surface of the sea, and their roaring will rise to the heavens. No one but God will understand it.

On the fourth day, the sea and all the waters will take fire.

On the fifth day, the trees and the plants will exude a bloody dew. And all of the birds of the air will come together, each of its kind, and they will neither eat nor drink, for fear of the strict Judge.

On the sixth day, all cities will collapse and all that is built, and fiery bolts of lightning will appear from sundown to sunrise.

On the seventh day, the stones will rub one against the other, and will break into four pieces.

On the eighth day, an earthquake will shake the whole earth, laying low man and beast.

On the ninth day, the earth will be levelled, mountains and hills being reduced to dust.

On the tenth day, men will come out of the caverns into which they will have fled, and will wander around like madmen, unable to converse with each other.

On the eleventh day, the skeletons of the dead will come forth from the tombs. And all the tombs will open from sunrise to sunset so that all the dead may come forth.

On the twelfth day, the stars will fall.

On the thirteenth day, all living beings will die, to rise again with the dead.

On the fourteenth day, the heavens and the earth will be consumed by fire.

On the fifteenth day, there will be a new heaven and a new earth, and all will rise again.

In the second place, the Last Judgement will be preceded by the imposture of the Antichrist, who will seek to deceive mankind in four ways: by a false explanation of the Scriptures, whereby he will try to prove that he is the Messiah promised by the Law; by working miracles; by the giving of gifts; by inflicting torments.

In the third place, the Last Judgement will be preceded by a mighty fire, lighted by God to renew the world, to make the damned suffer, and to throw light upon the troop of the elect.

With regard to the circumstances which will accompany the Last Judgement, we must first mention the separation of the good from the wicked, for we know that the Judge will come down to the Valley of Josaphat, and will place the good at His right, and the wicked at His left. This does not mean, as Saint Jerome very rightly says, that all men will succeed in finding room in that narrow valley (for that would be absurd), but simply that it will be the centre of the Judgement; although if God so chooses, nothing will prevent Him from making room in a small space for an infinite number of people.

Next comes the question of the number of categories into which men will be divided at the Last Judgement. Saint Gregory states that there will be four, two of the damned and two of the elect. For among the damned some will be judged, and others will already be condemned, namely those of whom it is said, 'He that does not believe, is already judged!' On the side of the elect, some will be judged, and others, the perfect, will judge the rest, insofar as they will be seated beside the Judge.

The insignia of the Passion will also appear at the Last Judgement, the Cross, the Nails, and the marks of the Wounds; and Chrysostom says that 'the Cross and the Wounds will shine more brightly than the rays of the sun.'

The Judge will be inexorably severe. He will not be influenced by fear, since He is all-powerful, nor by bribes, since He is Abundance itself, nor by hate, since He is Benevolence itself, nor by love, since He is Justice itself, nor by error, since He is Wisdom itself. Against His wisdom neither the pleading of advocates nor the sophisms of philosophers nor the discourses of orators nor the tricks of hypocrites will prevail.

The accuser will be as implacable as the Judge will be severe. Or rather the sinner will have against him three accusers: the Devil, sin itself, and the whole world. For, as Chrysostom says, 'On that day the heavens and the earth, the waters, the sun and the moon, the day and the night, in a word the whole world will stand against us before God, to bear witness to our sins.'

And in like manner, three witnesses will testify against us, all three infallible. In the first place, God Himself, Who tells us by

the voice of Jeremiah, 'I am the judge and the witness.' \* Secondly, our conscience. Thirdly, the Angel designated to watch over us, for we read in the Book of Job, 'The heavens (that is, the angels) shall reveal his iniquity.'

Lastly, the sentence will be irrevocable, and for three reasons: the excellence of the Judge, the evidence of wrong, and the impossibility of putting off the punishment. In the sentence pronounced against us at the Last Judgement, these three conditions will be fulfilled, and there will be neither king nor emperor nor pope, to whom we may appeal from that judgement.

\* All scriptural quotations are taken from the Douay-Rheims version.



## SAINT ANDREW THE APOSTLE

NOVEMBER 30

Andrew is translated beautiful, or responsive, or again manly, from the word *andros*, that is, man. Or Andrew comes from *anthropos*, man, which comes from *ana*, above, and *tropos*, turning: one who turns to God above and raises his eyes to his Creator. He was beautiful in his life, responsive in his wise teaching, virile in suffering, and esteemed by all for his manly virtues.

His martyrdom had been related by the priests and deacons of Achæa, or Asia, who saw it with their own eyes.

Andrew and several other disciples were called by Our Lord three times. The first time, He called them to *know* Him. That was the day when Andrew, with another disciple of John his master, heard the words 'Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world.' And immediately Andrew followed Jesus, and stayed with Him a whole day. Then on the morrow he returned to his calling, which was fishing. But some time later Jesus called him to His *friendship*. Coming with a great crowd to the shore of the Lake of Genesareth, which is also called the Sea of Galilee, He went into the ship that belonged to Simon and Andrew, and bade them take a huge catch of fish. Then Andrew called James and John, who were in another ship, and they followed the Lord, after which they again returned to their work. But soon the Lord called them a third time, this time to be His *disciples*. Walking one day beside the same lake, He signalled them to throw aside their nets, and said to them, 'Follow Me, I will make you fishers of men.' And they followed Him, and never again returned to their profession of fishing. Still a fourth time, moreover, the Lord called Andrew; this time it was to be His *apostle*, as Saint Mark the Evangelist has set forth in his third chapter. He called those whom He had chosen for Himself and they came to Him, and He saw to it that they were twelve in number.

The dates assigned to the various Feast Days are taken from *The Book of Saints*, The Benedictine Monks of St. Augustine's Abbey, Ramsgate. London: A. and C. Black, 1931.

After Our Lord's Ascension into Heaven, the apostles separated, and Andrew went into the land of Scythia, while Matthew went to Murgundia, also called Ethiopia. But the Ethiopians, refusing to heed Matthew's preaching, put out his eyes, bound him with chains, and threw him into prison, intending to put him to death within a few days. In the meantime, the Angel of the Lord appeared to Andrew, and commanded him to go to Ethiopia to be with Saint Matthew. Andrew answered that he did not know the way; whereupon the angel ordered him to go to the seacoast, and there to board the first vessel that he encountered. This Andrew made haste to do; and the ship, aided by a favourable wind, was not slow in carrying him to the town where Saint Matthew was. Then, with the angel to guide him, he made his way into the evangelist's prison, which he found open; and seeing Saint Matthew, he wept much and prayed. And the Lord, at his request, restored to Matthew the blessing of sight, which the cruelty of the unbelievers had taken from him. Matthew then left his prison and returned to Antioch. But Andrew stayed in Ethiopia, where the inhabitants, furious at his friend's escape, seized him and dragged him from place to place with his hands bound. His blood flowed freely; yet he prayed to God unceasingly for his tormentors, with the result that in the end he converted them. And it was after this that he set out toward Greece. This, at any rate, is the common story; but I for one find it very hard to believe, for the fact of the deliverance and cure of Matthew by Andrew would imply — and this is very unlikely — that the great evangelist and apostle was unable to obtain for himself what his brother secured for him so easily.

A young man of noble family had been converted by Saint Andrew and joined his company, against the will of his parents; whereupon the latter set fire to the house where he lived with the apostle. When the flames were already making headway, the young man poured a small glass of water on them, and the fire died out. Then the parents said, 'Our son has become a sorcerer.' And bringing up a ladder, they tried to climb up and carry off their son; but God struck them blind, so that they could no longer see the rungs of the ladder. A man who was passing shouted to them, 'Why waste yourselves in a vain effort? Do you not see that God is fighting for them? Make haste to yield, for fear that

the wrath of God fall upon you!' Many, seeing this, believed in the Lord. As for the young man's parents, they died after fifty days, both at the same hour.

A certain woman, who had married an assassin, was brought to bed, but could not bring forth her child. Then she said to her sister: 'Go and pray to our mistress Diana for me!' But instead of Diana, the Devil answered. 'It is useless to invoke me, for I can do nothing for thee. Go instead and find Andrew the Apostle; he can help thy sister!' She went therefore and sought out Saint Andrew, and brought him to the bedside of her sick sister. And the apostle said to her: 'Thou deservest thy sufferings, for thou hast married ill, conceived ill, and to crown all this thou hast called upon the Devil. But repent, believe in Christ, and thou shalt be delivered.' And in fact the woman made an act of faith, and brought forth a still-born child; and her pangs ceased.

An old man named Nicholas came one day to Saint Andrew and said to him: 'Master, I am now seventy years old, and I have never broken my addiction to impurity. Yet I have read the Gospel, and prayed to God to grant me the gift of continence. But, hardened in sin, and led astray by evil desires, I returned to my vicious habits. And yesterday it happened that, burning with lust, I forgot that I was carrying the Gospel on my person, and went to a house of ill fame. But behold, the wanton, when she saw me, cried out: "Go from me, old man! Do not touch me and do not try to enter this house; for I see wondrous things about thee, which show me that thou art a messenger of God!"' And I, astonished at these words, saw that I was carrying the Gospel. Now, holy apostle of God, I come to thee, that thy devout prayer may intercede with God, and may win my salvation.' Hearing this, the blessed Andrew started to weep, and he remained in prayer from the third hour to the ninth; and when he arose, he refused to eat, saying, 'I will not eat until I know that the Lord has taken pity on this poor old man!' And after he had fasted for five days, a voice from on high said to him: 'Andrew, thou hast obtained grace for the old man. But just as thou hast mortified thyself by fasting for him, so likewise he must fast in his turn, in order to earn his salvation.' And the old man did so. For six months he fasted on bread and water; after which he fell asleep in peace, full of good works. And again Andrew heard the voice,

which said to him, 'Thy prayer has restored to me Nicholas, whom I had lost!'

At the time when the apostle came to the city of Nicaea, the inhabitants told him that seven devils had gathered at the gates of the town, on the high road, and were killing the passersby. Then the apostle, before all the people, ordered the demons to come to him, and they came forthwith, in the form of dogs. The apostle commanded them to be off to some other place. Whereupon the demons fled. And those who witnessed this miracle accepted the faith of Christ. But it came about that when he arrived at the gates of another town, Andrew met the corpse of a young man being carried away for burial. And he was told that seven dogs had come in the night, and killed the young man in his bed. The apostle, in tears, cried out: 'I know, Lord, that these were the seven devils whom I chased out of Nicaea!' Then he said to the father: 'What wilt thou give me if I restore thy son to life?' 'I have nothing dearer than he,' answered the father, 'so I will give him to thee!' And when Andrew had prayed to the Lord, the young man rose and followed him.

Then men, to the number of forty, were on their way by sea to the apostle, to receive the word of faith from him, when the Devil raised a storm so violent that all were drowned. But their bodies were cast up on the shore by the waves, and the apostle straightway brought them back to life. And each one of them narrated the miracle which had befallen him. Whence it is that we read in a hymn of the Saint's office:

*Quaterdenos juvenes,  
Submersos maris fluctibus,  
Vitæ reddidit usibus.*

Then the blessed Andrew, having settled in Achæa, filled the whole region with churches, and led a great number of its inhabitants to the Christian faith. Among others, he converted the wife of the proconsul Ægeus, and baptized her. But the proconsul, as soon as he heard of it, came into the town of Patras, and commanded the Christians to sacrifice to the idols. Then Andrew came to meet him, and said: 'Thou who hast the merit to become a judge of earth, hast also the duty of acknowledging thy heavenly Judge, and having recognized Him, and adored Him, to renounce the worship of false

gods completely!’ But Ægeus answered: ‘I see that thou art that Andrew, who is preaching the noxious heresy which the princes of Rome recently ordered us to exterminate!’ Said Andrew: ‘That is because the princes of Rome do not yet know that the Son of God has come to earth, and has taught that your idols are demons, and their doctrine an offense to God. Wherefore, since God has abandoned them, the Devil seizes these men and deceives them as he lists, until the day when their souls leave their bodies and stand naked, wearing nothing but their sins.’ Ægeus, in answer, said: ‘Yes, and because your Jesus was teaching you this nonsense, they nailed him to a cross.’ And Andrew replied: ‘It was to give us salvation, and not to expiate His own wrongs, that He freely accepted the agony of the Cross.’ Then said Ægeus: ‘How canst thou say that he freely suffered death, when we know that he was handed over by one of his disciples, imprisoned by the Jews, and crucified by the soldiers?’ Then Andrew set out to prove, by five arguments, that the Passion of Christ was voluntary: for Christ had foreseen His Passion and had foretold it to His disciples, saying, ‘Behold we go up to Jerusalem’; He was indignant when Peter wished to deter Him; He had declared that He had the power to suffer and rise again; He had pointed out in advance the man who would betray Him, had broken bread with him, and had done nothing to escape; finally, He had gone straight to the place where He knew the traitor would come to arrest Him. And Andrew added that the mystery of the Cross was a great one. ‘It is by no means a mystery, but a punishment,’ replied Ægeus. ‘And if thou refusest to obey me, I shall see to it that thou also shalt taste the same mystery!’ ‘If I were afraid of the pain of the Cross,’ Andrew responded, ‘I should not be preaching the glory of the Cross. But first let me teach thee the mystery of the Cross, that perhaps thou mayest consent to believe in it, and be saved!’ Thereupon he set out to explain to him the mystery of Redemption, proving to him, by five arguments, how necessary and logical this mystery was: for since the first man had brought death into the world by means of a wooden object, namely the tree of good and evil, it was necessary that the Son of Man should banish death by dying on an object of wood; since the guilty man had been made of spotless earth, it was necessary that the Redeemer should be born of a spotless virgin; since Adam had stretched forth his greedy hands toward the forbidden fruit, it was necessary that the

second Adam should stretch out His pure hands on the Cross; since Adam had tasted the sweetness of the apple, it was necessary that Jesus should taste the bitterness of gall on the Cross; since Jesus was giving His own immortality to man, it was necessary that He should take man's mortality in exchange. For if God had not become mortal, man could not have become immortal. Then said Ægeus, 'Go teach these inanities to your own people; but in the meantime, thou shalt obey me, and offer sacrifice to the all-powerful gods!' And Andrew: 'To Almighty God I offer daily a Lamb without stain, Who, after all the people have eaten Him, remains alive and whole.' And Ægeus asked how that could be, and Andrew replied, 'Become His disciple and I will show you.' And Ægeus: 'Very well, I shall have thee tortured until thou hast proved to me that thou canst perform this miracle!' And, enraged, he had him imprisoned forthwith. The next morning, taking his place in the judgement seat, he again called upon Andrew to sacrifice to the idols, saying: 'If thou refusest to obey me, I shall have thee nailed to the cross of which thou boastest so loudly.' And he threatened him with other torments. But the apostle answered: 'Fear not to devise the torture that seems most dreadful to thee: for the more I shall have borne patiently in the name of my Lord, the more pleasing I shall be in His sight!' Then Ægeus ordered twenty-one men to seize him, flog him, and thereafter bind him to the cross by his hands and feet, in order that his agony might last the longer. As they were leading him to the cross, a crowd gathered, saying: 'He is innocent, and his blood is about to be shed unjustly.' But the apostle asked them to do nothing to prevent his martyrdom. Then, seeing the cross in the distance, he greeted it, saying: 'Hail, O Cross that hast been sanctified by the body of Christ, and adorned with His limbs as with precious stones! Before the Lord was nailed to thee, thou didst inspire fear on earth; but now thou drawest heavenly love, and art desired as a boon. Thus I come to thee assured and joyful, so that thou mayest graciously receive me, the disciple of Him Who hung upon thee: for I have always loved thee, and yearned for thy embrace. O good Cross, ennobled and beautified by the limbs of the Lord, long desired, constantly loved, ceaselessly sought, take me away from men and return me to my Master, in order that He, having redeemed me by thee, may receive me from thee!' Saying these words, he divested himself and handed his

garments to his executioners, who fixed him to the cross as they had been commanded. For two days Andrew hung there alive, and preached to twenty thousand people. On the third day the crowd began to threaten the proconsul Ægeus with death, saying that it was an abominable thing to inflict such suffering on an old man full of gentleness and piety. Ægeus, alarmed, came to have him taken from the cross. But Andrew, seeing him, said: 'Art thou here, Ægeus? If thou art come to seek forgiveness, thou shalt have thy pardon; but if thou art come to take me down from the Cross, know that I am not to come down alive! And already I see my King awaiting me in Heaven!' The soldiers sought to unbind him, but they could not touch him, for instantly their arms fell back powerless. And Andrew, seeing that the crowd wished to take him down from the Cross, uttered this prayer, which Saint Augustine has quoted in his book *On Penance*: 'Lord, suffer not that I come down alive from this cross; for it is time for Thee to give my body back to the earth. I have borne it so long, I have aged and toiled so much, that now I would ask to be freed from this charge, and relieved of this heavy burden. As long as I was able, merciful Father, I have resisted the attacks of the body, and with Thy help I have conquered it. But now I ask of Thee, in reward, no longer to command this struggle, and to take back that which Thou hast committed to me. Entrust it now to the earth, which may keep it, and restore it to me on the day of the resurrection of the body, in order that it too may receive the reward which it has earned! And permit that I may no longer have need to watch, and that my body hinder me no longer from going freely toward Thee, Source of eternal life and eternal joy!' When he had said these words, a dazzling light came down from Heaven and enveloped him for the space of a half hour, hiding him from sight; and when the light vanished, he breathed forth his soul. Maximilla, Ægeus' wife, took away his body and buried it with honour. But Ægeus, before he reached his house, was seized upon by a demon, and expired in the street, in the presence of all.

It is also said that manna in the form of flour and a scented oil used to issue from the tomb of Saint Andrew, and that by these signs the people of the environs could foretell the fruitfulness of the coming year: for if the oil flowed abundantly, it was a sign that the earth would be very fruitful. That, of course, may have happened

in the past; but today it is generally admitted that the saint's body is no longer at Patras, but was transferred to Constantinople.

There was a certain pious bishop who loved Saint Andrew above all other saints. He never did anything without saying, 'In God's and Saint Andrew's name.' This excited the Devil's envy, and craftily he sought to deceive the bishop. He took the form of a wondrously beautiful woman, and came to the bishop's palace, asking to be allowed to confess to him. The bishop remanded the woman to his penitencer, who had full powers to hear her confession. But the woman answered that she was oppressed with secrets which she could reveal to no one but the bishop; so that in the end he allowed her to be brought before him. Then she said: 'I pray you, my lord, have pity on me, for I am still young. I was tenderly nurtured, as you may well see, and am of royal blood. I am the daughter of a mighty king, who wished to marry me to a great prince; but I declared to him that I held the nuptial bed in horror, because I had vowed my virginity to Christ forever. Seeing myself doomed to the worst torments if I persisted in my refusal, and preferring to live in misery rather than break my vow to my heavenly Bridegroom, I resolved to flee; and I have come to thee in the garb of a pilgrim to seek refuge beneath the wings of thy holiness, in the hope of finding with thee a place where I might devote myself in peace to contemplation, escape the tumult of the world, and be free of the calamities of life.' The bishop, admiring such fervour and such eloquence in a person so noble and so fair, answered her kindly: 'My child, be without fear! He for Whose love thou hast made little of thyself and thy kin will grant thee the fulness of His grace in this life, and a superabundance of His glory in the life to come. And I, His servant, place myself at thy disposal with all that I have; and today I desire thee to eat at my table.' But she said: 'No, my father, do not ask this of me, lest there come of it some evil rumour which might cause thy good repute to suffer.' And the bishop made answer: 'We shall not be alone at table, for many of my people will be with me, so that no ill report can arise.' The time came when they were to go to the table; and the bishop and the woman were seated opposite each other, and the others at the sides. The bishop could not desist from studying her face and admiring her great beauty. And while his eyes were upon her, his heart was filled with desire, and the Evil One drove his arrow deep into him.



From minute to minute the woman became more beautiful; and the bishop was about to ask her to do his will at the first opportunity, when of a sudden a pilgrim appeared at the door, and beat upon it mightily to obtain admittance. No one would let him in, but he began to knock and to shout more loudly. Finally the bishop asked the woman if she saw any reason why they should not admit the stranger. She replied: 'Let us propose to him a question that will be very difficult to answer. If he answers it, let him in. If not, he is not worthy of being admitted to your presence.' The plan pleased every one, and they began to look about to find one wise enough to propound the question. Then the bishop said to the woman: 'No one of us is so well able to devise the question as thou art, fair lady, who surpaskest all of us in wisdom and eloquence.' Then said the woman: 'Ask him what is the most wonderful thing that God has ever done in a small compass.' The question was put to the stranger, who replied to the porter: 'It is the variety and excellence of human faces: for among the innumerable multitude of men created from the beginning to the end of the world, no two have the same features; and yet God has placed in each of these small spaces the seat of all the senses of the body.' Hearing this the company said: 'That is an excellent and true answer to the question.' Then the woman said: 'Let a second, more difficult question be given to him, so that we may appreciate his wisdom the more. Ask him in what point the earth is higher than all the heavens.' The stranger replied to the porter: 'It is in the empyrean heaven, for there the body of Christ resides, which is higher than all the heavens; and yet it is of our flesh, but our flesh is made of earth; therefore in that point the earth is higher than heaven.' This second answer received a like approval from the company. But the woman spoke again: 'Now we shall truly sound the depth of his wisdom; for the third question is to be the hardest and the most hidden. If he discovers the sense of this question, then he is indeed worthy of being admitted to the bishop's table. Ask him what is the distance from heaven to earth!' To this the stranger replied to the porter: 'Go ask that of the one who sent thee here, and receive thy reply from him, for he knows it better than I; he measured it when he fell from Heaven into the depths. I have never fallen from Heaven, so I have never measured the distance. This being is not a woman, but a devil who has taken the form of a woman!'

The porter took fright at these words and ran back to report them to the company. They were overwhelmed with fear and wonder, but the devil disappeared before their very eyes. Straightway the bishop, entering into himself, reproached himself bitterly; and he sent someone quickly to look for the pilgrim, but he too had disappeared. Then the bishop called the people together, confessed all, and asked them to begin fasts and prayers that God might deign to reveal the identity of the stranger who had saved him from so great a danger. And that very night God revealed to the bishop that it was Saint Andrew who, to save him, had come dressed as a pilgrim. Thereafter the bishop honoured Saint Andrew more than ever.

The prefect of a certain city had taken possession of a field which belonged to a church of Saint Andrew. At the prayer of the bishop, the prefect was immediately stricken with fever, because of his great sin. He thereupon asked the bishop to pray for him to Saint Andrew, promising to return the field if he recovered his health. But when he had recovered, he again seized the field. Then the bishop, before resorting to prayer, put out all the lamps of the church, saying: 'Let this light shine no more until God be avenged upon His enemy, and the stolen property restored to the church.' And on the instant the prefect was again seized with the fever. He again requested the bishop to pray for him, and promised to return the field and another of equal size; and when the bishop answered that he had already prayed, the prefect had himself carried to the bishop's house, and forced him to go with him to the church and pray anew for his intention. But hardly had the bishop entered the church when the prefect died; and the field was promptly given back to the church.

## SAINT NICHOLAS

DECEMBER 6

Nicholas comes from *nicos*, that is, victory, and *laos*, that is, people, and means therefore a conqueror of the people, or, in other words, of all vices that are mean and common. Or it means a victory of the people, because he taught many peoples how to conquer vice and sin, by means of admonitions and examples. Or Nicholas comes from *nicos*, victory, and *laus*, praise; that is, conquering praise.

Or it comes from *nitor*, brightness, and *laos*, people, and means brightness of the people; for in him was the power to make all clean and bright. For as Ambrose writes: 'God's words make clean, true confession makes clean, and holy contemplation, and good works.'

The life of Saint Nicholas was written by certain doctors of Argos, a town in Greece, whence, according to Isidore, comes the name of Argolics, sometimes given to the Greeks. It is also said that this legend was first written in Greek by the Patriarch Methodius, and later translated into Latin by John the Deacon, who also added to it.

Nicholas, a citizen of the city of Patras, was born of rich and pious parents. His father was called Epiphanius, and his mother Joanna. His parents, after having brought him into the world, abstained from all contacts of the flesh and lived in godly love.

On the very day of his birth, while he was being bathed, Nicholas arose and stood straight up in his bath. Throughout his infancy he took the breast only once on Wednesdays and Fridays. As a youth he avoided all the pleasures of his companions and spent his time visiting the churches; all the passages of the Holy Scriptures which he heard there, he committed to memory. Upon the death of his parents, being very rich, he looked for a way of using his wealth, not to win men's praise, but to promote God's glory.

Now one of his neighbours, a man of noble estate, was so poor that he was about to deliver his three daughters to prostitution in order to make a living from the profits of their shame. As soon as Nicholas heard of this, he was horrified at the thought of such a sin; and wrapping up a lump of gold in a cloth, he threw it through a window of his neighbour's house during the night, and then fled without being seen. When the man arose the next morning, he found the bundle of gold; and thanking God, he at once set about preparing the nuptials of his eldest daughter. Some time later, Saint Nicholas did the same thing a second time. The neighbour, finding the gold, broke out in great pæans of praise, and made up his mind for the future to watch, and find out who it was who thus came to the relief of his poverty. And when, a few days later, a quantity of gold twice as large was thrown into his house, he heard the noise which it made in falling. He set out in pursuit of Nicholas, who had taken flight, and begged him to stop, so that he could see his face. He ran so fast that he finally caught up with the young man, and so was able to recognize him. Throwing himself before him,

he sought to kiss his feet; but Nicholas declined his thanks, and exacted a promise that the man would keep the secret of his deed until after his death.

Some time afterward, the bishop of the city of Myra died, and all the bishops of the region gathered to choose his successor. Among them was a certain bishop whose authority was great, and who guided the opinion of all his colleagues. This bishop, after he had exhorted them all to fasting and prayer, heard a voice in the night telling him to post himself at the door of the church in the morning, and to consecrate as bishop the first man he should see entering, and whose name would be Nicholas. He made known this admonition at once to the other bishops, and hied himself to the door of the church. Meanwhile Nicholas, miraculously sent by God, turned his steps towards the church before dawn, and was the first to enter. The bishop, coming up to him, asked him his name. And he, full of humility, bowed his head and answered: 'Nicholas, the servant of Your Holiness.' Then the bishops led him into the church and installed him on the episcopal throne. But he, amidst his honours, always preserved his former humility and gravity of mien. He passed the night in prayer, mortified his body, and shunned the society of women. He was humble in his attitude towards others, persuasive in speech, forceful in counsel, and severe in his reprimands. A chronicle also states that Saint Nicholas took part in the Council of Nicæa.

One day certain seamen, being in peril on the deep, prayed as follows, with tears: 'Nicholas, servant of God, if what we have heard of thee is true, let us make trial of it at this moment.' At once there appeared before them someone who had the guise of the saint, and said to them: 'You called me, here I am!' And he began to assist them with the sails and the ropes and the other tackle of the ship; and in the twinkling of an eye the storm ceased. Being saved in this manner, these sailors betook themselves to the church where Nicholas was, and recognized him instantly, although they had never seen him. They thanked him then for their deliverance; but he told them to thank God, since the credit could be given only to the divine mercy and their own faith.

At one time the whole province of the diocese of Saint Nicholas was stricken with a terrible famine, to such an extent that no one had anything to eat. At this juncture the man of God learned

that some vessels laden with grain were anchored in the port. He repaired thither at once, and besought the ships' people to come to the aid of those who were starving, if only by allowing them a hundred measures of wheat from each ship. But they replied: 'Father, we dare not, because our cargo was measured at Alexandria, and we must deliver it whole and entire to the imperial granaries.' The saint answered: 'Do what I tell you nonetheless, and I promise you in God's name that the imperial customs-men will not find your cargo diminished.' The men did so; and when they arrived at their destination, they turned over to the imperial granaries the same quantity of grain that had been measured out at Alexandria. They saw the miracle, bruited it abroad, and glorified God in the person of his servant. Meanwhile the grain which they had left behind was handed out by Nicholas to each one according to his needs, and in so miraculous a fashion that not only did it suffice to feed the whole region for two years, but supplied enough for plenteous sowings.

In the past this region had adored idols; and even in Saint Nicholas' time, some of the peasants still practised certain pagan rites beneath a tree consecrated to Diana. To put a stop to this idolatry, the saint had the tree cut down. At this the Devil, infuriated, compounded an unnatural oil, which had the property of burning in water or on stone. Then, assuming the form of a nun, he boarded a ship, hailed some pilgrims who were faring toward Saint Nicholas by sea, and said to them: 'It grieves me to be unable to accompany you on your visit to this holy man. Be good enough, in memory of me, to spread this oil on the walls of his church and house.' But once the Devil's ship had drawn away, the pilgrims saw another craft, in which was Saint Nicholas, coming toward them. He said to them: 'What did that woman say to you and what did she give you?' The pilgrims told him what had taken place. Then he said: 'That woman was no nun, but the shameless Diana herself. And if you want proof of it, cast her oil upon the water.' Hardly had they thrown it out when it burst into flame, thus proving that it was not a natural thing, but a devilish creation. The second bark then disappeared. But when the pilgrims entered the church of Saint Nicholas, they recognized him as the man who had been aboard the bark, and who had saved them from the Devil's trickery.

A certain nation had rebelled against the Roman emperor, and

he sent against them three princes, Nepotian, Ursus, and Apilion. On the way they were brought to a halt by a contrary wind, and dropped anchor in a harbour within the diocese of Saint Nicholas. The saint invited them to dine with him, wishing to shield his people from being plundered by them. Meanwhile, in the saint's absence, the consul had been bribed to condemn three innocent knights to death. No sooner did the saint hear of this than he begged his guests to accompany him; and running with them to the spot where the execution was to take place, he found the three knights already on their knees, their eyes bandaged, and the executioner brandishing his sword over their heads. On the instant, Nicholas, burning with zeal, threw himself upon the headsman, tore his sword out of his hands, unbound the three innocent men, and led them away with him, safe and hale. Then he ran to the consul's prætorium and forced the door, which was locked. Soon the consul came in haste to greet him. But the saint put him off, and said: 'Enemy of God, perverter of the law, how darest thou look us in the face, with so dreadful a crime on thy conscience?' and he heaped reproaches upon him; but at the behest of the princes, and at the sight of his repentance, he consented to pardon him. Whereupon the imperial emissaries, having received his blessing, went their way, and put down the rebels without bloodshed; and when they returned to the emperor, he gave them a splendid reception.

But certain of the courtiers, jealous of their good fortune, suborned the imperial prefect; and he, accepting their bribe, accused the three princes before the emperor of the crime of lese-majesty. In a rage, the emperor immediately had them thrown into gaol, and ordered them to be put to death without questioning, that very night. Being informed of their fate by the gaoler, the three princes tore their garments and lamented bitterly. But all at once one of them, namely Nepotian, recalled that the blessed Nicholas had lately, in their presence, saved three innocent men from death; and he exhorted his companions to invoke his aid. The result was that in answer to their prayer, Saint Nicholas appeared that night to the Emperor Constantine, and said to him: 'Wherefore hast thou had these princes arrested unjustly, and condemned them to death when they are innocent? Make haste, arise, and order them to be set at liberty at once! Otherwise I shall pray to God to stir up a war in which thou shalt go down to defeat, and be left a prey to the beasts.'

Said the emperor: 'Who art thou, to come into my palace at night and talk to me in this fashion?' Nicholas responded: 'I am Nicholas, bishop of the city of Myra.' In like manner the saint appeared to the prefect, whom he terrified by saying to him: 'Fool, why hast thou agreed to the execution of three guiltless men? Go at once, and spare no effort to have them released. Otherwise thy body will be devoured by worms, and thy house destroyed on the spot.' The prefect replied: 'Who then art thou, to threaten me thus?' 'Know,' was the reply, 'that I am Nicholas, bishop of the city of Myra.' The emperor and the prefect, rising from sleep, made known their dreams to each other, and hastened to summon the three princes. 'Are you sorcerers,' asked the emperor, 'to delude us with such visions?' They replied that they were not sorcerers, and that they were innocent of the crime of which they were accused. Then said the emperor: 'Do you know a man named Nicholas?' At the mention of the name, they lifted their hands to Heaven, and prayed God to save them by the merits of Saint Nicholas, from the peril that beset them. And when the emperor had heard from them of the life and miracles of the saint, he said to them: 'Go, and thank God, Who has saved you at the prayer of this Nicholas. But give him an account of my conduct, and bring him gifts in my name; and ask him not to threaten me any longer, but to pray to God for me and for my empire.' Some days later the princes came to visit the servant of God. They threw themselves before him, called him a true servant of the Lord, and told him in detail the things that had happened. And he, raising his hands to Heaven, praised God, and sent the princes home, after instructing them thoroughly in the truths of the faith.

When the Lord wished to call Nicholas to Himself, the saint prayed that He would send His angels. And when he saw them coming, he bowed his head and recited the Psalm *In Te Domine, speravi*; and when he came to the words *in manus tuas*, which means 'into Thy hands I commit my spirit,' he breathed forth his soul to the sound of heavenly music. This occurred in the year of the Lord 343. He was buried in a marble tomb, and a fountain of oil began to flow from his head, and a fountain of water from his feet. Even today a holy oil issues from his bones, and cures all illnesses.

One day this oil ceased to flow: this happened when the successor of Saint Nicholas, an excellent man, was driven from his see by

spiteful enemies. But no sooner was the bishop reinstalled in his see, than the oil flowed anew. Long afterward, the Turks razed the city of Myra. Forty-seven soldiers from the town of Bari happened to be passing through, and four monks opened the tomb of Saint Nicholas to them; they removed his bones, which were immersed in oil, and carried them to Bari, in the year of the Lord 1087.

A certain man had borrowed some money from a Jew, giving him his oath on the altar of Saint Nicholas that he would repay it as soon as possible. As he was slow in paying, the Jew demanded his money; but the man declared that he had returned it. He was summoned before the judge, who ordered him to swear that he had repaid the money. In the meantime, the man had placed the money that he owed in a hollow staff, and before giving his oath, he asked the Jew to hold the staff for him. Whereupon he swore that he had returned the money and more besides. Then he took back his staff, the Jew handing it over all unaware of the trick. But on the way home the defrauder fell asleep on the roadside and was run over by a chariot, which also broke open the staff in which the gold was hidden. Learning this, the Jew ran to the spot; but although the bystanders pressed him to take his money, he said that he would do so only if, by the merits of Saint Nicholas, the dead man was restored to life, adding that in this event he himself would receive baptism and be converted to the faith of Christ. Immediately the dead man came back to life, and the Jew was baptized.

Another Jew, seeing the miraculous power of Saint Nicholas, placed a statue of the saint in his house. Whenever he had to leave his house for a long absence, he used to say to the statue: 'Nicholas, I entrust thee with the care of my goods; but if thou dost not watch over them for me as I demand, I shall avenge myself by smashing thy body.' Now one day when the Jew was absent, thieves came and carried off everything, leaving only the statue. And when the Jew saw that he had been robbed, he said to the statue: 'Sir Nicholas, had I not installed thee in my house to guard my goods? Why hast thou not done so? Well then, thou shalt pay for the thieves! I shall smash thee to bits; it will cool my wrath!' And he began to beat the statue cruelly. At this the saint appeared to the robbers, who were dividing their spoils, and said to them: 'See how I have been beaten on your account! My body is still black and blue. Quick! Go and give back what you have taken, or the anger of



God will fall upon you, and you will be hanged.' The thieves answered: 'And who art thou, to say all this to us?' He replied: 'I am Nicholas, the servant of Christ; and the one who has done this to me is the Jew whom you robbed.' Terrified, they ran to the Jew's house, told him of their vision, learned from him what he had done to the statue, restored all his goods, and returned to the path of virtue; while the Jew, for his part, was converted to the Christian faith.

A certain man celebrated the feast of Saint Nicholas each year with great pomp, on behalf of his son, who was a student in the schools. One day, in the midst of the feast, the Devil, in the guise of a pilgrim, knocked on the door and asked for alms. The father at once ordered his son to bring alms to the pilgrim; and the young man, not finding him at the door, pursued him to a crossroad, where the Devil attacked him and strangled him. Hearing this, the father wept; and carrying the body back to his house and laying it on a bed, he cried out: 'Saint Nicholas, is this my reward for the honours I have tendered thee for so many years?' On the instant, the youth, as if he were just waking up, opened his eyes and stood on his feet.

A nobleman had prayed to Saint Nicholas to obtain a son for him, and promised that in return he would go with his son to the saint's tomb, and would offer him a gold cup. He obtained a son, and ordered the cup to be made. But it pleased him so much that he kept it for himself, and ordered another of like value for the saint. Then he took ship with his son, to journey to the saint's tomb. On the way, the father told his son to fetch him some water in the first cup which had been intended for Saint Nicholas. In a trice the boy fell into the river and was drowned. But the father, despite his grief, pursued his journey. Arriving in the church of Saint Nicholas, he placed the second cup on the altar; and at the same instant an unseen hand thrust him back with the cup and threw him to the ground. He picked himself up, returned to the altar, and again was overthrown. And then, to the great astonishment of all, the child whom they believed dead appeared. In his hand he held the first cup; and he told how, the minute he fell into the water, Saint Nicholas had plucked him out, and had kept him whole and well. Whereupon the father, overcome with joy, gave the two cups to Saint Nicholas.

A rich man had obtained a son through the intercession of Saint Nicholas, and called him Deodatus. He also built a chapel in his house in honour of the saint, and there solemnly celebrated his feast every year. But one day Deodatus was captured by the tribe of the Agarenians, and carried off in slavery to the king of the tribe. The following year, on Saint Nicholas' day, while he was serving the king with a precious cup in his hand, the boy began to weep and sigh, at the thought of his parents' grief, and of the joy they had always felt on the feast of Saint Nicholas. The king made him confess the reason for his sadness; and having heard it, he said: 'Thy Nicholas can try as he likes, thou shalt remain my slave.' But at that very instant a mighty wind arose, overthrew the king's palace, picked up the boy with the cup, and carried him to the threshold of the chapel where his parents were celebrating the feast of Saint Nicholas.

However, according to other authors, this child was of Norman origin, and was borne off by the Sultan, who, on Saint Nicholas' day, beat the boy and then threw him into prison; but the boy fell asleep, and wakened to find himself back in the chapel with his parents.

## SAINT AMBROSE

DECEMBER 7

Ambrose comes from *ambra*, a costly and aromatic spice, for he was very precious in the eyes of the Church, and spread a pleasing aroma around him by his speech and his actions. Or, Ambrose comes from *ambra* and *syos*, God; this would mean, the amber of God, for through him God spreads a pleasing aroma such as comes from amber. Or, it comes from *ambor*, father of light, and *sior*, small, for he was a father in conceiving spiritual children, a light in his interpretation of the Scriptures, and small in his humility. Or, as the *Gloss* says, Ambrose means a heavenly aroma or taste of Christ; *ambrosia* is a food of the angels; *ambrosium* is the comb of heavenly honey. For Ambrose was a divine odour by the perfume of his good renown; he was a good taste by his interior contemplation; a heavenly honeycomb in his sweet interpretation of the Scriptures; a food of angels by his glorious fruit of good works.

The life of Saint Ambrose was written by Paulinus, the bishop of Nola, in a letter to Saint Augustine.

Saint Ambrose was the son of a prefect of Rome, who also bore the name Ambrose. While he lay asleep in his crib, a swarm of bees descended upon him, and the bees went into his mouth as into a hive, and then flew away so high that the eye could not follow them. Then the child's father, greatly frightened, exclaimed: 'This child, if he lives, will surely be a man of great deeds.' Later in his youth, Ambrose saw his mother and his sister, who was a nun, kissing the hands of the priests, and extended his own hands to his sister to kiss, for a pleasantry; but he said that one day she would have to kiss them in earnest. But his sister paid him no heed, thinking it was but childish prattle. He studied letters at Rome, and pleaded cases at law in the Prætorium with such effect that the Emperor Valentinian appointed him to govern the provinces of Liguria and Emilia. He went therefore to Milan, where the populace was gathered together to choose a bishop. And as the Arians and the Catholics were locked in dispute over the election, Ambrose intervened to put an end to their quarrel. And suddenly a child's voice was heard to say that Ambrose himself should be elected Bishop; and to this all the people gave their assent, so that he was elected by acclamation. But as soon as he saw what had happened, he sought to dissuade them from their choice. From the church he went straight to his tribunal, and, departing from his custom sentenced several prisoners to bodily punishments. Nevertheless the populace persisted in its choice, and cried out: 'May the guilt of thy sin fall upon us!' Then, much distraught, Ambrose repaired to his house, and pretended to be a pagan philosopher, but he was persuaded to desist from this deception. Then he caused women of pleasure to be brought in to him, in the sight of all, hoping that the spectacle of this scandal would turn the people against making him their bishop. But even this was of no avail, for the multitude continued to clamour: 'May thy guilt be upon us!' At this Ambrose, in desperation, resolved to flee in the middle of the night, and set out for the Tessino. But after travelling throughout the night, he found himself, in the morning, before one of the gates of Milan, called the Roman Gate. There the folk knew him at sight, and held him. Meanwhile the whole affair was reported to the Emperor Valentinian, who was much pleased to learn that one

of his officials had been chosen to be bishop. And the good prefect also rejoiced that his prophecy had been fulfilled, for he had said to him once at parting: 'Depart, but do not conduct yourself like a judge but like a bishop.' In the meantime Ambrose, in Milan, had again gone into hiding, and once more had been found out. He was baptized (for as yet he was but a catechumen), and eight days later mounted the episcopal throne. And four years thereafter, when he came back to Rome, his sister, the nun, reverently kissed his right hand, and he laughed and said to her: 'Did I not tell thee long ago that one day thou shouldst kiss my hand in earnest?'

One day Ambrose went to ordain a bishop in a city where the Empress Justina and some other heretics were attempting to obtain the election of a man of their sect. And an Arian damsel who was bolder than the others mounted the pulpit where Ambrose stood, and began to pull at the skirt of his robe, trying to drag him toward a group of women, so that they might beat him and put him out of the church. But Ambrose said to her: 'Unworthy as I am of my priesthood, thou hast not the right to lay a hand upon a priest! Thou shouldst fear the judgement of God, that no evil befall thee in consequence of thy deed!' His words were speedily borne out by the event: for the next day the maid expired, and Ambrose presided at her obsequies, thus rendering good for evil. And the example of her death struck terror throughout the city.

Returning to Milan, Ambrose was hard pressed to escape the innumerable snares laid by the Empress Justina, who sought by force of money and cajoleries to stir up the people against him. And as many of them strove to drive him from the city, one, less wary than the rest, rented a house hard by the church, and there kept a four-horsed chariot in readiness, so as to carry off the bishop the moment that, with Justina's connivance, he succeeded in laying hold of him. But God willed that on the very day when he had planned to make off with Saint Ambrose, he himself was forced to go into exile in his chariot. And Ambrose, returning good for evil, undertook to provide for his sustenance.

At that time there were many in Milan who were possessed, and they cried aloud that they were being tormented by Saint Ambrose. Justina, however, and many of the Arians who sat around her, said that Ambrose had paid those who said they were possessed of evil spirits and tortured by him. But one of the Arians, himself pos-

sessed of a devil, cried out: 'May all be tortured in a like manner who do not believe in Ambrose.' At this, all the others were greatly frightened; and they took the man, and threw him into a fish pond.

One day a certain heretic, who was fanatical in dispute and very difficult to convert, was listening to the preaching of Saint Ambrose, when he saw an angel whispering the words of his sermon into the saint's ear. At this sight, the man became a defender of the faith which formerly he had opposed.

There was in Milan a soothsayer who conjured the demons, and sent them to torment Ambrose. But the demons came back declaring that they could not get near to Ambrose nor to his house, because a raging fire surrounded the whole building, and scorched them even at a distance. This same man was later tortured by order of the judges because of his sorcery, and he cried out that Saint Ambrose was torturing him yet more severely.

Another demon, who had taken possession of the spirit of a certain man, went out of this man each time that he entered the city of Milan, and entered into him again when he came out. The demon, being asked for what reason he did this thing, replied that he feared to come in contact with Saint Ambrose.

There was also a man who, at Justina's instigation, stole into the saint's chamber at night to stab him; but when he raised his arm to strike the blow, of a sudden it withered and fell lifeless at his side.

Walking one day in Milan, Saint Ambrose mistook his step and fell. A passerby broke into laughter at the sight. But the saint said to him: 'Thou that thinkest to stand, take heed lest thou fall!' And indeed, at that very instant, the man who had laughed fell flat on the ground, and had to lament his own plight, after mocking the discomfiture of another.

Another day, Ambrose betook himself to the palace of a magistrate named Macedonius, to intercede for an accused man, but found the palace gates closed, and was unable to obtain entrance. Whereupon he said to the magistrate: 'Thou likewise shalt soon come to my church, and shalt find the doors open, but thou shalt not be able to enter!' And so it came about: for within a short time, Macedonius, in flight from his enemies, sought to take refuge in the church; but albeit the doors stood wide open, an unseen power repelled him from them.

In the church at Milan, Saint Ambrose established a chant and

an Office which are still in use there. His manner of life was so austere that he fasted every day except the sabbath, Sunday, and the great feast days. His liberality was such that he gave to the churches and to the poor all that he possessed, keeping nothing for himself. His compassion was such that when a sinner confessed his sins, Saint Ambrose wept so bitterly that the sinner must needs weep with him. Such were his humility and his diligence that he wrote his books with his own hand, so long as his strength permitted him. Such were his piety and meekness of soul that when he heard of the death of some holy priest or bishop, he mourned with his whole heart, and would not be consoled: and he made it clear that he grieved not because these saintly men had entered into glory, but because they had gone before him, and left an empty place that could not be filled. And such were his courage and steadfastness that he was wont to upbraid the emperor and the princes in public for their vices.

We are told that Saint Ambrose, in the course of a journey to Rome, was received as a guest in a villa in Tuscany, the home of an exceedingly rich man, and that he questioned his host with insistence about the state of his fortunes. To this the host responded: 'My lord, my fortune has ever been felicitous and glorious. Look you, I possess untold wealth, and slaves and servitors without number: my wishes have always been fulfilled, and never have I suffered reverses, nor even displeasure.' Hearing this, Saint Ambrose was overcome with astonishment, and said to his travelling-companions: 'Up with you, and away from this place with all speed, for the Lord has no place in this house! Make haste, my sons, and let us be off, lest the vengeance of God overtake us here, and engulf us in the punishment of the sins of this household!' And scarcely had Saint Ambrose and his company left the house behind, when the earth opened and swallowed up the rich man and all that was his, leaving not a trace. When he saw this, Ambrose said: 'See you, my brethren, how mercifully God deals with us when He sends trials upon us, and how sternly He behaves in our regard when he sends us a long series of pleasures!' And the story adds that a deep ravine still marks this spot, as a reminder of the event.

As time went on, Saint Ambrose saw the vice of greed, the source of all evil, growing among men from day to day. He saw it increasing most of all among the officials, who made traffic of all things,

and likewise among the chief men of the Church. And this spectacle awakened such grief in him that he prayed to God to deliver him from converse with the world and its corruption. God heard his prayer; and one day the holy bishop made known to his brethren that after the feast of the Pasch he would be with them no longer. And some days before Easter, while he lay upon his bed and dictated an exposition of Psalm XLIV, his scribe saw a tongue of fire descend upon him, and enter into his mouth. And instantly the saint's face took on the whiteness of snow, and then regained its natural colour. And from that day the saint had to cease writing and dictating, so that he was unable even to finish his commentary on the psalm; and his bodily weakness waxed from hour to hour. At this the Count of Italy called together the magnates of Milan, told them that the death of such a man would imperil the whole country, and admonished them to go to the saint and to prevail with him to obtain from God another year of life. But this Saint Ambrose refused to do, saying: 'I am neither ashamed to live, nor afraid to die.'

Four deacons who were gathered in a room at some distance from the chamber where the saint lay, were discussing whether this man or that should be elected bishop at the death of Ambrose. And when one of them whispered the name of Simplicianus, Saint Ambrose cried out thrice from his bed: 'Old though he be, he is the best of all!' And as it turned out, Simplicianus was elected to succeed Ambrose. And the saint, lying in the death-agony, saw Jesus draw near to him and smile tenderly upon him.

Honorius, the bishop of Vercelli, who was expecting word of Ambrose's death from one moment to the next, had fallen asleep, when in a dream he heard a voice repeat three times the words: 'Be on thy way, for the moment of his death draws nigh!' At this the bishop set out for Milan with all speed, and gave the holy Communion to Saint Ambrose, who extended his arms in the form of a cross, and breathed his last. He flourished about the year of the Lord 379.

And in the night of Easter, when the body of Saint Ambrose was borne to the church, a multitude of Christian children saw the saint in a dream. Some saw him seated upon his throne, others mounting his pulpit; and some of them related to their parents that they had seen a star above his head.

A priest was partaking of his meal together with many others,

and began to speak ill of Saint Ambrose; suddenly he received so severe a blow that he had to be carried from the table to his bed where he soon after died.

Three bishops were sitting at table in the city of Carthage. One of them began to slander Saint Ambrose, whereupon he was informed of what had happened to a certain priest who had acted in a similar manner. This the bishop did not believe and he began to laugh. On the instant he received a mortal wound and soon after gave up the ghost.

Saint Ambrose may be cited as an exemplar of many Christian virtues. Firstly, he stands forth as a model of generosity. All that he possessed belonged to the poor. And when the emperor wished to deprive him of one of his churches, he answered: 'If thou hadst demanded what is mine, I would give it thee; for all that I possess belongs to the poor.' Secondly, he was a model of chastity, for he remained a virgin all his life. Of this, Jerome says that Ambrose had said: 'I not only preach chastity, but I practice it as well.' Thirdly, he offers us an example of steadfastness in faith, for to the emperor, who sought to take his church away from him, he made answer: 'Thou mayest take my life, but thou shalt not take my see!' Fourthly, Saint Ambrose is a model of the desire of martyrdom. We read in his letter, *That the basilica is not to be surrendered*, that when one of Valentinian's prefects threatened to put him to death, he said to him: 'God grant thee to carry out thy threat, and let thy blows spare the Church, to fall upon me solely!' Fifthly, Saint Ambrose sets us an example of perseverance in prayer: for we read in the eleventh book of the *Ecclesiastical History* that he defended himself against the rage of Justina not with sword and lance but only by fasting, by vigils, and by his prayers at the foot of the altar.

Sixthly, we may speak of the superabundance of his tears. His tears were of three kinds: tears of compassion for the guilt of others; of this Paulinus tells us in his legend, that when a sinner confessed to him, Ambrose wept so bitterly that the man confessing was moved to weep with the saint. He also wept tears of piety in his great longing for Heaven, as we have read above and as Paulinus tells us; for when he was asked why he bewailed the death of the pious, he replied: 'Do not believe that I weep because they have gone from us, but because they have preceded me into glory.' He also had tears of compassion for the misdeeds of others; of this he says him-



self, 'My weapons against the enemies of God are my tears; with these alone can the priest protect himself; I cannot and may not do otherwise.'

Seventhly, Saint Ambrose may be cited as a model of constancy. His constancy is made manifest mainly in three things.

The first of these is his defence of the true Catholic faith. Of this we read in the eleventh book of the *Ecclesiastical History* that Justina, the mother of the Emperor Valentinian, and the protectress of the Arian heresy, sought to sow discord within the Church; she threatened to drive the priests into exile, if they did not revoke the edicts of the Council of Rimini. In this she fought against Ambrose, the wall and the strong tower of the Church. Therefore we sing in his Preface, 'Thou hast, O Lord, endowed Ambrose with such strength and adorned him so mightily with the gift of constancy, that the demons were tortured and driven out by him, that the Arian heresy disappeared before him, and that the princes of the world bowed their necks under the yoke in submission to him.'

The second is his defence of the liberty of the Church. When the emperor wished to take a certain basilica from him, he objected, as the saint himself says in his 23rd Decree: 'The dukes of the emperor come to me demanding that I give the basilica over to them; for the emperor had the legal right to be obeyed.' Then I replied: 'If the emperor demands my parental heritage, take it; does he seek my body, I am prepared; if ye wish to put me in chains, do so; seek ye my death, it is also my will. I do not hide myself among the multitude nor do I cling to the altar, begging for mercy, but rather will I offer myself for the altar. I am commanded to give over the church, the decrees of the emperor press upon me, but the words of the Scriptures give me strength. Therefore be not guilty, O Emperor, of the sin of claiming any authority over the things of God! To the Emperor belong the palaces, but the churches belong to the priests. Naboth of old laid down his life in defense of the vineyard which King Achab sought to take from him: and if he refused to give up his vineyard, how canst thou think that we might cede to thee a church of Christ? The tribute is Cæsar's, and we refuse not to give it to him; but the churches are God's, and we cannot therefore give them to Cæsar. If he seeks my house, or my property, or gold and silver, which rightfully belong to me, I will give it to him gladly. But of the Temple of God I can give him

nothing, nor can I lessen it in any way. It was given to me that I might protect it, not destroy it.'

The third proof of Ambrose's constancy is his manner of condemning vice and wickedness. It is written in the *Tripartite History* that when the people of Thessalonica rebelled and slew certain officials, the Emperor Theodosius was so angry that he put all the citizens to the sword, to the number of about five thousand, without discerning the innocent from the guilty. But when later he came to Milan and wished to enter the church, Saint Ambrose met him at the door and enjoined him from entering, saying: 'After such a crime, O Emperor, dost thou not see the enormity of thy presumption? Or is it that thine imperial estate blinds thee to thy sins? Thou art a ruler, Emperor, but like other men thou art the servant of God. How dost thou dare to lift hands to God that are yet stained with innocent blood? How dost thou dare to pray to God in His temple with the same lips that uttered an unjust and monstrous command? Withdraw, then, lest by a second sin thou aggravate the first. Accept the bonds which the Lord has placed upon thee, for they are the medicine that can cure thee!' And the emperor, weeping and groaning, retraced his steps to his palace. And when Rufinus, the commander of his troops, asked him the reason of his grief, 'Alas,' he responded, 'the churches stand open to slaves and beggars, and I alone have not the right to enter them!' Rufinus answered: 'If it please thee, I shall hasten to Ambrose, and persuade him to loose the bonds with which he has bound thee.' But the emperor replied: 'Thou canst not move Ambrose to do so, for he does not fear the imperial power sufficiently to transgress the commandments of God.' And so insistent was he that in the end Theodosius allowed him to go, and shortly followed after him. But the instant Ambrose saw him, he said: 'Wilt thou copy the impudence of curs, Rufinus, baying against the majesty of God?' And when Rufinus entreated him in behalf of his master, telling him that the emperor was on his way, Ambrose, aflame with celestial fire, said: 'I declare to thee that I forbid him entrance to the church! And if he turns his authority into tyranny, gladly will I accept death!' Rufinus carried these words to the emperor, who answered: 'Then shall I myself go to Ambrose, and receive his just reprimand in my own person.' Then Ambrose, still refusing him access to the church, said to him: 'What penance hast thou done for such a

crime?’ And the emperor responded: ‘Thine it is to impose, and mine to obey!’ And when Theodosius reminded him that the good King David himself had been guilty of murder and adultery, the bishop answered: ‘Thou hast followed him in his errors: follow him now in his repentance!’ And the emperor was so impressed by these words that he at once undertook to do penance. And he did public penance until his excommunication was lifted. Later, when he came to the church, he made his way into the choir; but Ambrose asked what he did there, and when he replied that he came to assist at the Holy Sacrifice, the Saint said: ‘O Emperor, the choir of the church is set aside for priests only. Retire from hence, therefore, and take thy place in the nave with the rest of the faithful: for the purple makes thee an emperor, but not a priest!’ And straightway the emperor obeyed. When he returned to Constantinople, however, the bishop sent word to him to come into the choir; but Theodosius declined, saying: ‘Thanks to Ambrose, I now know the difference between an emperor and a priest.’

Eighthly, Saint Ambrose may be held up as a model because of the sanctity of his teaching. His doctrine is so rich and profound that Saint Jerome, in his *Twelve Doctors*, says of him: ‘Every sentence of Saint Ambrose is a pillar of the faith and of all the virtues.’ Speaking of the beauty of his speech, Saint Augustine says in his book, *Of Espousals and Marriage*, that Pelagius, the prince of heretics, praises Saint Ambrose with these words: ‘The saintly Bishop Ambrose, in whose writings chiefly the Roman faith shines forth, is the flower among all the masters who write in the Latin tongue.’ And Saint Augustine adds that ‘even his opponents did not dare to question Ambrose’s doctrine, nor his clear understanding of the Sacred Books.’ And his authority was so great that each of his words carried weight with all the authors of his time. In his letter to Januarius, Augustine tells that his mother, wondering that the fast was not observed at Milan on the sabbath day, asked of Ambrose the reason for this, and he answered: ‘When I am in Rome, I fast on the sabbath. Do thou likewise, and when thou art in a diocese, follow what is done there, lest thou scandalize anyone, or thyself be scandalized.’ And Augustine adds that thereafter, having turned over these words in his mind, he came to consider them an oracle of God.

## SAINT LUCY

DECEMBER 13

Lucy means light. Light has beauty in its appearance; for by its nature all grace is in it, as Ambrose writes. It has also an unblemished effulgence; for it pours its beams on unclean places and yet remains clean. It has a straight way without turning, and goes a long way without halting. By this we are to understand that the virgin Lucy was endowed with a stainless purity of life; that in her was an effusion of heavenly love without any unclean desire; that she followed a straight way in her devotion to God, and a long way in daily good works without weakening and without complaint. Or again, Lucy means *lucis via*, the way of light.

Lucy, the daughter of a noble family of Syracuse, saw how the fame of Saint Agatha was spreading throughout the whole land of Sicily. She went to the tomb of this saint with her mother Euthicia, who for four years had suffered from an incurable issue of blood. The two women arrived at the church during the Mass, at the moment when the passage of the Gospel was being read which narrates the miraculous cure which Jesus worked upon a woman afflicted with an issue of blood. Then Lucy said to her mother: 'If thou believest what has just now been read, thou shouldst also believe that Agatha is now with Him for Whose name she suffered martyrdom. And if thou believest that also, thou shalt recover thy health by touching the saint's tomb in good faith.' And when all the people had left the church, the mother and her daughter remained and approached the tomb, and kneeling down devoutly, began to pray. And it happened that the maiden suddenly fell asleep, and dreamt that she saw Saint Agatha standing amidst the angels, decked with precious stones; and Agatha said to her: 'My sister Lucy, virgin consecrated to God, why dost thou ask of me something which thou thyself canst straightway grant to thy mother? Go, thy faith hath cured her!' Lucy, awakening, said to her mother: 'Mother, thou art healed! But in the name of her to whose prayers thou owest thy cure, I beg of thee to release me from my espousals, and to give to the poor the dowry thou hast saved for me.' Her mother answered: 'Wilt thou not rather wait until thou hast closed my eyes, and then do as it pleases thee with our goods?' But Lucy said:

'That which thou givest at death, thou givest because thou canst not bear it away with thee. But if thou givest it in thy lifetime, thou shalt have thy recompense in the world to come.'

When they returned home, Lucy and her mother began little by little to give away all their goods to the poor. And Lucy's betrothed, hearing this, inquired about it of the maiden's nurse. This woman put him off by answering that Lucy had found a better property, which she wished to buy, and for that reason was selling a portion of her goods. Being a dull-witted, greedy fellow, he foresaw a material gain, and encouraged them to sell their goods. But when all was sold and it became known that everything had gone to the poor, the betrothed, enraged, made a complaint to the consul Paschasius, saying that Lucy was a Christian and did not obey the laws of the empire.

Paschasius summoned her forthwith, and commanded her to offer sacrifice to the idols. But Lucy answered him: 'The sacrifice which is pleasing to God is to visit the poor and to help them in their needs. And since I have nothing else to offer, I shall offer myself to the Lord.' Said Paschasius: 'Those are words fit to be spoken to fools like thyself; but to me, who keep the decrees of my masters, thou speakest them in vain!' Lucy answered: 'Thou keepest the decrees of thy masters, and I, for my part, wish to keep the law of my God. Thou fearest thy masters, and I fear God. Thou art careful not to offend them; I am ware of offending God. Thou desirest to please them, and I wish to please Christ. Do then what thou thinkest useful to thee, and I shall do what I think is useful to me.' Then said Paschasius: 'Thou hast squandered thine heritage with seducers, and therefore thou speakest like a vile woman.' But Lucy replied: 'As to my heritage, I have put it in a safe place; and never have I allowed near me any seducers, either of the body or of the soul.' Paschasius said to her: 'And who are these seducers of the body and of the soul?' And Lucy answered: 'You and those like you are the seducers of the soul, because you lead souls to turn away from their Creator; as for the seducers of the body, they are those who would have us put fleshly pleasures ahead of eternal joys.' Said Paschasius: 'Thy words will cease when thou feelest the blows of the lash.' Lucy responded: 'The words of God will never cease!' 'Pretendest thou to be God?' asked Paschasius. Lucy answered: 'I am the handmaid of God, Who said to His disciples, "You shall

be brought before governors and before kings for my sake . . . but when they shall deliver you up, take no thought how or what to say . . . for it is not you that speak but the Holy Ghost that speaketh in you." ' Then said Paschasius: 'Dost thou claim to have the Holy Ghost in thee?' Said Lucy: 'He who lives chastely is the temple of the Holy Ghost!' 'Then I shall send thee to a house of ill fame! There thy body will be violated, and thou wilt lose thy Holy Ghost.' But Lucy answered: 'The body is not soiled unless the soul consents; and if in my despite my body is ravished, my chastity will thereby be doubled. Thus thou canst not ever force my will. And as for my body, here it is, ready for every torture. Why delayest thou? Son of the Devil, begin! Carry out thy heinous design!'

Then Paschasius summoned panders, and said to them: 'Invite the crowd to have pleasure with this woman, and let them abuse her body until she dies.' But when the panders tried to carry her off, the Holy Ghost made her so heavy that they were unable to move her. Paschasius called for a thousand men, and had her hands and her feet bound; but they still did not succeed in lifting her. He sent for yokes of oxen; but the virgin could not be moved. Magicians were called, but their incantations were powerless. Then he said: 'What is this witchery, which makes a thousand men unable to move a lone maiden?' And Lucy replied: 'It is no witchery, but the beneficence of Christ. And you could add another thousand men, and they still would fail to move me.' Then the consul, beside himself with rage, commanded that a great fire be built around her, and that pitch, resin, and boiling oil be thrown upon her. And Lucy said: 'God has granted that I should bear these delays in my martyrdom, in order to free the faithful from the fear of suffering, and to take away from unbelievers any reason for denying His power!'

The friends of Paschasius, seeing him grow more and more furious, plunged a sword into the saint's throat. But, far from losing the power of speech, she said: 'I make known to you that peace is restored to the Church! This very day Maximian has died, and Diocletian has been driven from the throne. . And just as God has bestowed my sister Agatha upon the city of Catania as its protectress, so He has this moment entitled me to be the patroness of the city of Syracuse.' And in good truth, while she was still speaking,

envoys from Rome arrived to seize Paschasius, and take him as a prisoner before the Senate; for the Senate had learned that he was guilty of innumerable thieveries throughout the province. He was therefore brought to Rome, bound over to the Senate, convicted, and put to death. As for the virgin Lucy, she did not stir from the spot where she had suffered, but remained alive until the priests came to bring her Holy Communion, the whole populace piously assisting. There also she was buried, and a church was raised in her honour. Her martyrdom took place about the year of the Lord 310.

## SAINT EUSEBIUS

DECEMBER 16

Eusebius comes from *eu*, which means good, and *sebe*, which means eloquence or standing. Or else Eusebius means good worship. For he was good in the sanctification of himself, eloquent in defending the faith, upstanding in constancy in his martyrdom, and offering good worship in his reverence for God.

Even while he was still a catachumen, Eusebius preserved the virtue of chastity so perfectly that when he was baptized by Pope Eusebius, who gave him his own name, the hands of angels were seen lifting him from the sacred font. And one day when a certain noble lady, captivated by his comeliness, sought to enter his bedchamber, the angels prevented her, so that the next morning she fell at his feet and besought his pardon. After he was ordained a priest, he shone with such sanctity that while he celebrated the Mass, the hands of angels were seen raising up his hands.

At a later time, when all Italy was infected with the plague of Arianism, Pope Julian consecrated Eusebius bishop of Vercelli, which at that time was the chief of all the Italian cities. Learning of this, the heretics closed all the doors of the principal church in Vercelli, which was dedicated to the Virgin Mary. But Eusebius, entering the town, knelt before the doors of the church, and at once, in answer to his prayer, the doors opened of themselves. He then expelled Maxentius, the heretical bishop of Milan, and ordained a Catholic, Dionysius, in his stead. Thus Eusebius purged the whole Church in the West, and Athanasius the whole Church

in the East, of the Arian pestilence. Arius was a priest of Alexandria, who taught that Christ was a pure creature, declaring that there had been a time when He did not exist, and that He had been created for us, that God might create us by Him as by an instrument. And therefore Constantine the Great convened the Council of Nicæa, where this error was condemned. And Arius later died a miserable death. But Constantius, the son of Constantine, was corrupted by this heresy, and being aroused to anger against Eusebius, called a council of a great number of bishops, summoning Dionysius and Eusebius himself: but Eusebius, knowing that most of the bishops were heretics, refused to appear, pleading his old age as an excuse. But to take away this excuse, the emperor convoked the council at Milan, hard by Vercelli. Eusebius nevertheless did not go to Milan. Constantius ordered the Arians to propound their teaching; then he commanded Dionysius and twenty-nine other bishops to subscribe to this doctrine. Hearing of this, Eusebius quitted Vercelli and set out for Milan, predicting that there he would suffer many ills.

On the way he came to a river which he must needs cross. At his order, a boat which was moored at the other side came to him of itself, and bore him and his companions across the river without anyone at the helm. Then Dionysius came to meet him, and falling at his feet begged his pardon. When he came to Milan, Eusebius would not be moved either by the emperor's threats or by his blandishments. And he said before all: 'You say that the son is lesser than the father: Why then have you put Dionysius, my son and disciple, before me, the bishop of Vercelli? For the disciple is not greater than the master nor the slave above his lord nor the son above the father.' Then they showed him the profession of faith which the Arians had composed and which Dionysius had signed. But he said: 'Never shall I sign my name beneath that of my son, since I am above him in authority. Burn this screed therefore, and write a new one for me to sign.' And by the will of God the paper which Dionysius and the twenty-nine other bishops had signed was consumed by fire, and the Arians wrote another, and offered it to Eusebius and the other bishops to sign. But they, encouraged by Eusebius, refused to subscribe thereto, and began to rejoice that the paper which they perforce had signed had been burnt. Then Constantius, exceeding wroth, handed Eusebius over



to the Arians. And they promptly tore him from the midst of the other bishops, beat him cruelly, and dragged him up and down the steps of the palace. And when he still refused to sign, albeit his head was bloodied from the blows which he had suffered, they bound his hands behind his back, and dragged him about with a rope around his neck. But he gave thanks to God, and proclaimed that he was ready to die for the Catholic faith.

Then Constantius sent into exile Pope Liberius, Dionysius, Paulinus, and all the other bishops who had followed their example. And the Arians bore Eusebius off to Scytopolis, a town of Palestine, and confined him in a cell which was so small that it was shorter than his length and narrower than his breadth, so that he lay crouched, and could not turn to the other side, nor stretch his legs, nor raise his head, but could move only his shoulders and elbows.

After the death of Constantius, Julian his successor, desiring to please all, recalled the bishops from exile, reopened the temples of the gods, and allowed each one to live in peace under whatever law he chose. Then Eusebius, leaving his place of exile, went to Athanasius and recounted to him all that he had suffered.

At Julian's death, in the reign of Jovinian, the Arians being pacified, Eusebius returned to Vercelli, where the populace welcomed him with great rejoicing. But in the reign of Valens the Arians again increased in number. These heretics besieged the house of Eusebius, dragged him forth, and stoned him to death. He was buried in the church which he himself had constructed. It is also told that by his prayers he obtained from God this favour, that no Arian could abide in Vercelli. According to the chronicle he lived at least eighty-eight years. He flourished about the year of the Lord 350.

## SAINT THOMAS THE APOSTLE

DECEMBER 21

Thomas means abyss; or it means twofold, which is *didimus* in Greek; or it comes from *thomos*, which means dividing or separating. He is called abyss because he fathomed the depths of God's being, when Christ, in answer to his question, said: 'I am the way, the

truth, and the life.' He is called twofold because he was aware of the resurrection of Our Lord in a twofold manner, not only with his eyes like the others, but by seeing and touching. He is called dividing or separating, because he separated his heart from the love of the world; or because he set himself apart from the other disciples in his belief in the Resurrection. Or again, Thomas means *totus means*, one who wanders totally, or who is wholly outside himself, namely in the love of God and in His Presence. For there were three wondrous things in him which signify this love for God. Prosper speaks of it in the book *The Contemplative Life*: 'What is loving God other than longing in one's soul to see Him, to hate sin, and to despise the world?' Or again, Thomas comes from *theos*, that is, God, and *meus*, my, and means therefore: 'My God,' and that is because he said: 'My Lord and My God,' when he saw that Christ had risen.

While Thomas the Apostle was at Cæsarea, the Lord appeared to him and said: 'Gondofar, the King of India, has sent his provost, Abbanes, to look for a man skilled in the art of building. Come, and I shall present thee to him.' And Thomas said: 'Lord, wherever Thou sendest me, I am ready to go, but do not send me to India.' And God said to him: 'Thomas, go in peace and without fear, for I shall be thy guardian. And when thou hast converted India, thou shalt come to Me with the palm of martyrdom.' And Saint Thomas said: 'Thou art my Lord, I am Thy servant. Thy will be done!' Then, as the provost was walking in the market place, the Lord said to him: 'What seekest thou, young man?' Abbanes replied: 'My master has sent me here to engage skilled architects for his service, because he wishes to build a palace in the Roman style.' Then the Lord presented Thomas to him, and assured him that he was very skillful in the art.

The ship which bore Thomas and the provost touched at a town where a king was celebrating the wedding of his daughter. The king had commanded that the entire city assist at the feast, and Thomas and Abbanes were obliged to attend it. In the palace there was a Hebrew maiden who carried a flute in her hands and sang words of praise for each of the guests. When she saw the apostle she knew that he was a Hebrew, because he ate nothing and kept his eyes raised towards Heaven. Then she sang to him in Hebrew, 'There is a God in Heaven, the God of the Hebrews,

who created all things and the sea.' And Thomas bade her sing again. Now the wine-steward, seeing that the apostle neither ate nor drank, struck him on the cheek. And the apostle said to him: 'It is better for thee to be punished at once with a punishment which will quickly be over, and to be pardoned in the life to come. Know then that before I leave this table, the hand that struck me will be borne hither by dogs.' And indeed the wine-steward was on his way to draw water when a lion threw himself upon him and slew him; and the dogs tore his body to shreds, and one of them carried his right hand into the banquet hall. The guests were greatly frightened. But the Hebrew maiden told them the words Saint Thomas had spoken, cast her flute to the ground, and threw herself at the apostle's feet. This act of vengeance is condemned by Saint Augustine in his book *Against Faustus*, and the story declared apocryphal; whence it is that many consider the legend as suspect. But we must return to our story.

At the king's request, the apostle blessed the bride and groom, saying: 'Lord, give to these young people the support of Thy right hand, and sow in their hearts the seeds of eternal life.' And when the apostle had departed, the young man found in his hand a palm branch laden with dates. After they had eaten these dates, the bridegroom and the bride both fell asleep and had the same dream. They saw a king adorned with diamonds, who embraced them and said: 'My apostle has blessed you in order that you may enjoy eternal life.'

They awakened, and told each other their dream. And then Thomas the Apostle appeared to them in their chamber, and said to them: 'My King showed Himself to you a moment ago, and brings me here now although the doors are closed, so that, strengthened by my blessing, you may preserve the purity of your bodies; for purity is the queen of all the virtues, and the one which leads to eternal salvation. Virginity is the sister of the angels; it is the possession of all good, victory over the passions, the prize of faith, the rout of the demons, and the gage of eternal joys. But on the other hand, from pleasure follows corruption, from corruption comes pollution, and from pollution comes perdition.' And as the apostle was speaking to them, two angels appeared and said: 'God sends us to be your guardians, and also, if you abide by the words of the apostle, to bring all your wishes to Him.' Then the apostle bap-

tized them and instructed them in the faith. And long after, the wife, whose name was Pelagia, suffered martyrdom, and the husband, called Dionysius, was ordained bishop of that city.

The apostle and Abbanes pursued their journey, and came to the court of the King of India. Thomas drew up the plans for a splendid palace, and the king gave him a large store of treasure so that he might see to the building of the palace. Thereafter the king set out for another province; and the apostle distributed to the people all the money that he had received from the king.

During the two years of the king's absence, the apostle did naught but preach, and converted an innumerable multitude to the faith. But when the king returned and learned what Thomas had done, he threw him into prison, and Abbanes with him, intending to have them flayed and burned alive. Thereupon, the king's brother, who was called Gad, died, and preparations were under way to give him a magnificent funeral. But on the fourth day after his death, he returned to life, to the amazement and terror of all; and he said to the king: 'Brother, the man whom you wish to have flayed and burned alive is a friend of God, and all the angels are his servants. These angels brought me to Paradise, and showed me a wondrous palace built of gold and silver and precious stones; and they said to me: "This is the palace which Thomas built for thy brother. But thy brother has made himself unworthy of it. Now if thou desirest to dwell in it in his stead, we will ask God to restore thee to life, so that thou mayest buy back this palace from thy brother, by repaying to him the money which he thinks is lost."' When he had said these things, Gad ran to the apostle's prison, struck off his chains, and besought him to accept a precious mantle. But the apostle said: 'Knowest thou not that those who strive for heavenly glory set no store by earthly things?' And when the apostle came forth from the prison, the king came before him, and begged his pardon. The apostle said to him: 'Believe in Christ and be baptized, that thou mayest share in the everlasting kingdom!' The king's brother said to him: 'I have seen the palace which thou hast built for my brother, and I have secured the right to have it for myself.' The apostle said: 'That depends on thy brother.' And the king said: 'Let this palace be for me, and let the apostle build another for thee; or if this be impossible, we shall dwell there together!' The apostle said to them: 'In Heaven there are many.

palaces, prepared since the beginning of time; and they are won by faith and by almsdeeds. As for your riches, they can lead you to this palace, but they cannot follow you thither!

A month later, the apostle called together all the poor of the region, and when all had gathered, he called the sick, and halt, and the feeble out of the crowd. Then he prayed over them, and those among them who had received the faith responded, 'Amen!' Then a great light came down from heaven and spread over the apostle and these poor folk, and threw them to the ground as if they had been struck by lightning, and they remained so for half an hour. And when it had vanished, the apostle said to them: 'Arise! It was my Master who came, like unto lightning, and cured you.' And in truth, they were all cured; and they arose, and glorified God and the apostle.

Then he began to instruct them, and explained to them the twelve degrees of virtue. The first degree is to believe in a God one in essence and threefold in person. And the apostle explained to them by means of three memorable examples how three could be one, and said to them: 'The wisdom of man is one, and yet it is composed of reason, with which you discover that which you have not learned, memory, with which you retain that which you have learned, and comprehension, with which you understand the things that are shown or taught to you. The vine, too, is made up of three elements, wood, leaves, and fruit, and yet they form but one vine. A head contains four senses, sight, taste, hearing, and smell, and yet it is but one head.' The second degree of virtue consists in receiving baptism; the third in abstaining from sins of the flesh; the fourth in avoiding covetousness; the fifth in shunning gluttony; the sixth in doing penance; the seventh in persevering in good works; the eighth in practising compassion; the ninth in seeking out what God desires us to do; the tenth in seeking out what God desires us not to do; the eleventh in loving friends and enemies; the twelfth in being on guard day and night so as to fulfill all of these things. Thus preached the apostle; and when he had finished, he baptized nine thousand men, not counting the women and children.

Next Thomas went to Upper India, and distinguished himself by numberless miracles. He converted a certain Sinticia, who was a friend of Migdomia, the wife of Carisius, a relative of the king of the country. And Migdomia was seized with a desire to see

the apostle. Taking the advice of Sinticia, she laid aside her rich clothing, and mingled with the poor whom the apostle was instructing. Now the apostle was engaged in preaching upon the misery of this perilous and fleeting life. He urged his hearers to receive the word of God cheerfully for four reasons, and he compared the word to four kinds of things: to an eye-salve, because it enlightens the eyes of the soul; to a potion, for it purifies our will of all desires of the flesh; to a plaster, because it heals the wounds of our sins; to a food, because it feeds us with heavenly love. And just as these four things are of little use to the patient unless he use them diligently, so the word of God cannot help a sick soul unless it be heard with reverence. And Migdomia, having heard the apostle, received the faith; and thereafter she held her husband's bed in horror. Then Carisius made complaint to the king, and had the apostle thrown into prison. And Migdomia came to visit him in prison, and begged his pardon for being the cause of his plight; but the apostle consoled her kindly, and said that he was happy to bear all his suffering. Meanwhile Carisius besought the king to send the queen, her sister, to his wife to try to bring her back to him. But the queen was converted by her whom she wished to lead astray; and at the sight of the apostle's miracles she exclaimed: 'Cursed be those who refuse to believe so many signs and wondrous works!' And Saint Thomas taught all who were present three things: to love the church, to honour the priests, and to come gladly to hear the word of God. When she returned to her husband, he said to her: 'Why hast thou been absent so long?' And the queen answered: 'I thought that Migdomia was mad, but on the contrary she is very wise. She led me to the apostle of God, and enabled me to know the way of truth. Only those are mad who refuse to believe in Christ!' And thenceforth she refused to lie with her husband. And the king, dumfounded, said to his brother-in-law: 'I tried to bring back thy wife to thee, and I have lost my own; she has become even harder toward me than thine toward thee!' Then he caused the apostle to be brought before him, his hands bound, and commanded him to counsel his wife and his sister-in-law to return to their husbands. And the apostle demonstrated by means of three examples, namely, those of the king, of the tower, and of the spring, that as long as he and his brother-in-law persisted in their error, their wives were bound to abstain from conjugal life. 'Thou,

who art a king, art careful not to have unclean servants, but on the contrary to have clean servants. It is all the more reasonable that God should love to have His servants chaste and pure. He loves, in His servants, what thou lovest in thine. How now! I have built a high tower, and to me who have built that tower thou sayest to tear it down? I have dug deep into the earth and made a spring to gush forth, and thou sayest to dry it up?

Then the king, in a rage, sent for iron plates fired to a red heat, and ordered the apostle to stand on them with his feet bare. But instantly, upon a sign from God, a spring broke forth from the ground and cooled the iron. Then the king, at the suggestion of his brother-in-law, had him plunged into a fiery furnace; but it was extinguished immediately, and the apostle emerged unharmed the next morning. And Carisius said to the king: 'Command him to sacrifice to the god of the sun, that he may draw down upon himself the wrath of his god, who protects him.' The king followed his advice, but Thomas said to him: 'Thou thinkest that my God will be angry with me, as thy brother-in-law says, if I adore thy god; but it is against thy god that He will be angered, and He will destroy him the instant I adore him. If my God does not destroy thine the moment I adore him, I shall consent to offer sacrifice to him; but if my God destroys him, promise me that thou wilt believe in Him!' And the king said: 'Thou hast the effrontery to treat me as if I were thine equal!' Then the apostle, in Hebrew, commanded the demon who was in the idol to demolish it as soon as he should bend the knee before it. Then, falling to his knees, he said: 'I adore, but not this idol; I adore, but not this metal; I adore, but not this graven image; I adore my Master Jesus Christ, in Whose name I command thee, demon of this idol, to destroy it forthwith!' And at once the idol melted as if it were made of wax. Whereupon all the priests bellowed like cattle; and the high priest of the temple, raising his sword, drove it through the apostle, saying: 'Thus I avenge the insult done to my god!' And the king and Carisius fled, seeing that the people wished to avenge the apostle, and burn the high priest alive. But the Christians bore away the body, and buried it with all solemnity.

Long afterwards, more than 230 years after the birth of Christ, at the plea of the Syrians, the Emperor Alexander brought the apostle's body to the city of Edessa, which of old was called Rages

by the Medes. It is a city where no heretic, Jew, or pagan can live, and where no tyrant can work evil, because long ago a king of this city, named Abgar, received a letter written by Our Lord's own hand. And as a result, if any ill threatens this city, a baptized child stands above the gate and reads the Lord's letter, and straightway the evil-doers are put to flight, or do penance.

In his *Life and Death of the Saints*, Isidore says of Saint Thomas: 'Thomas, who was a disciple of Christ, and who bore a resemblance to the Saviour, was incredulous of what he heard, but believed when he saw. He preached the Gospel to the Parthians, the Medes, the Persians, the Hircanians, and the inhabitants of Bactriana. Setting foot on the shores of the Orient and penetrating into the interior, he preached to the nations there until the day of his martyrdom. He died from the thrust of a lance.' And Chrysostom says also that Thomas made his way into the land of the Wise Kings of the East, who of yore had come to adore Christ. He baptized them, and made them pillars of the Christian faith.

## THE DIFFERENCE IN TIME

Now we have spoken of the feasts that fall in the period of renewal, which lasts from the time of Moses and the Prophets until the Advent of Christ in the flesh, and which is kept from Advent to Christmas inclusively. We shall now speak of the feasts that fall in the period of which one part is in the time of the reconciliation and the other in that of the pilgrimage. This time is represented in the Church from Christmas to Septuagesima.

## THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

DECEMBER 25

There is disagreement about the date of the birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh. Some say that it took place 5228 years after the birth of Adam, others that it occurred 6000 years thereafter. Eusebius of Cæsarea reckons only 5199 years in his Chronicle.



Methodius was the first to put the date at 6000 years: but he found this by mystical inspiration rather than by chronological calculation.

It is known, in any case, that the birth of Christ occurred under Emperor Octavian, who was also called *Cæsar*, after his uncle Julius Cæsar, and *Augustus*, because he 'augmented' the Roman Republic, and *Imperator* because of his imperial dignity; for, differing from other kings, he was the first to be called by that name. And at the same time when the Son of God was born in the flesh, a universal peace reigned in the world, which was united under the pacific authority of one Roman emperor.

Cæsar Augustus, being master of the world, wished to know how many provinces, cities, fortresses, villages, and men he possessed. Consequently he decided that all the men of his Empire should go to the town or village of their origin, and to pay to the governor of the province a silver penny, in token of their submission to the Roman Empire. Thus it was that Joseph, who was of the house and family of David, went up from Nazareth to Bethlehem, whither the enrollment called him. And as the time was approaching for Mary to be delivered, and Joseph did not know when he would be able to return, he took her with him to Bethlehem, not wishing to confide to the hands of strangers the treasure with which God had entrusted him. The *Book of the Infancy of the Saviour* tells, in this regard, how the Virgin, as she drew near to Bethlehem, saw some of the people rejoicing, and others lamenting. And the angel explained this to her, saying: 'Those who rejoice are the people of the heathen who, in Abraham's seed, are about to be admitted to eternal bliss. Those who grieve are the people of the Jews, for God is about to cast them out, in accordance with their deserts.'

Then Joseph and Mary came to Bethlehem. Being poor, they could not find lodging in the inns, for these were already filled with those who had come for the same purpose; and they had to take shelter in a public passage, or shed. This, according to the *Scholastic History*, was located between two houses, and served as a meeting place for the people of Bethlehem, or again as a shelter against the uncertainties of the weather. There Joseph set up a crib for his ox and his ass, or perhaps it was there already, for the peasants to use when they came to market.

And there, at midnight, the eve of Sunday, the Virgin brought forth her Son, and laid the beloved Child in the manger, upon some

hay. This hay was later brought to Rome by Saint Helena; and it is said that neither the ox nor the ass dared to touch it.

Let us recall, in this regard, that everything about the birth of Christ was miraculous. In the first place, it was a miracle that the Mother of Christ was a virgin, after the birth of her Son as well as before.

We have five witnesses to prove that she was a virgin. The first is the prophet Isaias, who in his seventh Chapter says: 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel.' The second is the example of Aaron's rod, which blossomed without the help of man. The third is Joseph's attention, for he watched over her and she remained pure. There is a fourth proof, for Bartholomew tells us that when the hour had come in which Mary was to be delivered, Joseph called two midwives, the one being called Zebel and the other Salome; not that he doubted that the Virgin would bear the Son of God, for he was only following the custom of the country. When Zebel saw that Mary was a virgin, she cried out: 'Truly, she is a virgin and she has given birth!' But Salome did not believe this and wished to examine her; thereupon her hand withered and died. Then an angel appeared and bade her touch the child; and immediately she was cured. The fifth proof was reported by Pope Innocent III. In the twelve years during which the world had been at peace, a temple of Peace had been built at Rome, in which was placed a statue of Romulus. The oracle of Apollo had been consulted, and had declared that the statue and the temple would stand until the day when a virgin would give birth to a child. All had concluded that the temple was to be eternal, for they did not believe it possible that a virgin could become a mother; and an inscription had been carved on the pediment: *Eternal Temple of Peace*. However, on the night of Our Lord's birth, this temple crumbled to the ground; and on its site the church of Santa Maria Nuova stands today.

No less miraculous are all the other circumstances of the Nativity. We know, for instance, that it was revealed to every class of creatures, from the stones, which are at the bottom of the scale of creation, to the angels, who are at its summit.

The Nativity was revealed to inanimate creatures. We have already seen from the example just narrated that it was made known to the stones of a temple at Rome. Moreover it is known that in

the night of the Nativity, the darkness of the night was changed to the brightness of day. In Rome, the water of a spring changed to oil, and flowed thus down to the Tiber; whereas the Sibyl had foretold that the Saviour of the world would be born when a fountain of oil began to flow. The same day, certain Magi were praying on a mountain, and saw a star appear which had the form of a fair child, bearing over his head a cross of fire. And he told the Magi that they were to go to Jerusalem, and there they would find a newborn child. The same day three suns appeared in the East, and fused into one, which was an evident sign of the Holy Trinity. Finally, here is what Pope Innocent III tells us: in order to reward Octavian for having established peace in the world, the Senate wished to pay him the honours of a god. But the wise Emperor, knowing that he was mortal, was unwilling to assume the title of immortal before he had asked the Sibyl whether the world would some day see the birth of a greater man than he. Now on the day of the Nativity the Sibyl was alone with the emperor, when at high noon, she saw a golden ring appear around the sun. In the middle of the circle stood a Virgin, of wondrous beauty, holding a child upon her bosom. The Sibyl showed this wonder to Cæsar; and a voice was heard which said: 'This woman is the Altar of Heaven (Ara Cœli)!' And the Sibyl said to him: 'This child will be greater than thou.' Thus the room where this miracle took place was consecrated to the holy Virgin; and upon the site the church of Santa Maria in Ara Cœli stands today. However, other historians recount the same event in a slightly different way. According to them, Augustus mounted the Capitol, and asked the gods to make known to him who would reign after him; and he heard a voice saying: 'A heavenly Child, the Son of the living God, born of a spotless Virgin!' Whereupon Augustus erected the altar beneath which he placed the inscription: *This is the altar of the Son of the living God.*

The Nativity was revealed to the creatures which possessed existence and life, such as the plants and trees. For in the night of the Saviour's birth, the vines of Engedi bloomed, bore fruit, and produced their wine.

The Nativity was revealed to the creatures possessed of existence, life, and sensation, that is, to the animals. For indeed, Joseph, at his departure for Bethlehem, had taken with him an ox and an ass; the ox, perhaps, to sell, and so to have wherewith to pay the census

tax, and the ass, no doubt, to bear the Virgin Mary. Now the ox and ass, miraculously recognizing the Lord, knelt before Him and adored Him.

The Nativity was revealed to the creatures possessed of existence, life, sensation, and reason, that is, to men. The very hour that it occurred, shepherds were watching the night through near their flocks, a thing which they did twice a year; for it was the custom of the ancient peoples to wake through the nights of the solstices — that is, the longest and shortest nights of the year. To these shepherds, then, an angel appeared, and announced to them the birth of the Saviour, telling them also how they might find their way to Him. And they heard a multitude of angels singing, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will!' In yet another way, the Nativity was revealed through the Sodomites, who that night perished throughout the world. In this regard Saint Jerome tells us: 'So great a light arose that night that it extinguished all those who were given to this vice.' And Saint Augustine says that God could not take flesh in the nature of man as long as there existed, in this nature, an unnatural vice.

Finally, the Nativity was revealed to the creatures who possessed existence, life, sensation, reason, and knowledge, namely to the angels; for it was the angels themselves, as we have just seen, who announced the birth of Christ to the shepherds.

Now we must define the divers reasons for which the Incarnation of Our Lord was accomplished. It came to pass, first, for the confusion of the demons. On the eve of Christmas, Saint Hugh, the Abbot of Cluny, saw the Blessed Virgin holding her Son in her arms; and she said to him: 'Behold the day in which the oracles of the Prophets shall be fulfilled! Where henceforth is the Enemy who until now prevailed against mankind?' At these words, the Devil came forth from the earth, to give the lie to Our Lady's words. But his wickedness was of no avail. In vain he roamed throughout the monastery: neither in the chapel, nor in the refectory, nor in the dormitory, nor in the chapter-room, did a single monk allow himself to be distracted from his duty. According to Peter of Cluny, the Child, in the vision of Saint Hugh, said to His Mother: 'Now where is the power of the Devil?' Whereupon the Devil came out of the ground, and answered: 'I cannot, indeed, enter the chapel, where they are singing Thy praises; but the chapter, the

dormitory, and the refectory are still open to me!’ But it came out that the door of the chapter was too narrow for him, the door of the dormitory too low, and the door of the refectory blocked with obstacles which he could not surmount, these being none other than the charity of the monks, their attention to the reading of the day, and their sobriety in eating and drinking.

Next, the Nativity took place to enable men to obtain pardon for their sins. A Book of Examples tells the story of a prostitute who, having finally repented, despaired of forgiveness. And since she deemed herself unworthy to invoke Christ glorious, or Christ in His Passion, she bethought herself that children were easier to mollify: wherefore she called upon the Child Christ, and a voice made known to her that she was pardoned.

The Nativity took place to cure our weakness. For as Saint Bernard says: ‘Humankind suffers from a threefold malady — birth, life, and death. Before Christ, man’s birth was impure, his life was corrupt, his death a peril. But Christ came, and against this threefold ill He brought us a threefold remedy. His birth purified ours, His life corrected ours, and His death destroyed ours.’

Finally, the Nativity came to pass to humble our pride. For as Saint Augustine says: ‘The humility which the Son of God showed in His Incarnation is to our benefit as an example, as a consecration, and as a medicine: as an example, to teach us to be humble ourselves; as a consecration, because it delivers us from the bonds of sin; and as a medicine, because it heals the tumour of our vain pride.’

## SAINT ANASTASIA

DECEMBER 25

Anastasia comes from *ana*, meaning above, and *stasis*, meaning standing or stand; for she stood on high, raised from vices to virtues.

Anastasia belonged to one of the foremost families of Rome. Her father Prætaxatus was a heathen, but her mother, Faustina, was a Christian. She was raised in the Christian faith by her mother and by the Blessed Chrysogonus. Married against her will to a certain Publius, she feigned an enfeebling sickness, and withheld

herself from the marriage bed. But one day her husband learned that she was visiting the Christians in prison, and supplying their necessities, dressed as a poor woman and accompanied by one of her handmaids. He shut her away therefore, and allowed her almost no food. He hoped in this way to bring about her death, and to take his ease in the enjoyment of her dowry, which was very large. And she, expecting to die from one day to the other, wrote the most piteous letters to Chrysogonus, who, in his replies, did his best to console her. However, it was the husband of Anastasia who died, and she was set free.

She had three very beautiful serving-maids, who were sisters. One was called Agapeta, another Theonia, the third, Irene. All three were Christians. A prefect, who was smitten with desire for them, had them shut up in the kitchen of the house, on the pretext that they were not obeying the laws of the Empire; and one night he went to the kitchen to gratify his lust. But the Lord deprived him of his reason; and he, thinking that he was dealing with the three virgins, caressed the stoves, kettles, and other utensils, and covered them with kisses; after which, being sated, he went out all black with soot, and with his clothing torn to shreds. His slaves, who were waiting for him at the door of the house, thought he was a demon when they saw him in such disarray, beat him soundly, and ran away, leaving him alone. He set out to see the emperor, in order to register a complaint; and on the way, some struck him with rods, and others threw dust and mud at him and spat in his face. But a charm lay upon his eyes, and kept him from seeing his condition, and he was astonished that everyone made sport of him instead of giving him the honour to which he was accustomed. And when at last he was told of his sorry state, he supposed that the maidens had resorted to sorcery. He therefore had them brought before him, and commanded that they be stripped of their clothing, in order that he might at least see them naked. But at once their raiment adhered to their bodies in such manner that no one could remove it. And the prefect, at the instant when he was preparing to revel in the sight of them, fell into a sleep so deep that they could not awaken him, even by striking him. Finally the virgins suffered martyrdom.

As for Anastasia, the emperor handed her over to another prefect, in order that he might take her to wife, if he could force her to offer

sacrifice to the idols. This man placed her in his bed, and then wished to embrace her, when he was suddenly stricken blind. He was led to the temple of the gods, and asked them if he could be cured. But the gods answered: 'Because thou didst wish to ravish Anastasia, who is a saint, thou hast been delivered to us, to be tortured with us forever in Hell.' And while his slaves were leading him homeward, he died in their arms.

Then Anastasia was entrusted to another prefect, who was charged with the duty of guarding her. This man, having learned that she was very rich, said to her secretly: 'Anastasia, if thou art a true Christian, thou shouldst do what thy Master has commanded thee. He orders His disciples to renounce all that they possess. Give me therefore all that is thine, and go wherever it pleases thee! Thus thou wilt be a true Christian!' But she replied: 'God has indeed commanded me to give away all that I have, but to give it to the poor, and not to the rich. But thou art rich. I would go against the precepts of my God if I gave thee anything whatever.'

Anastasia was then thrown into prison, to die there of hunger; but Saint Theodora, who had already won the crown of martyrdom fed her for two months with heavenly manna.

At last she was taken, with two hundred virgins, to the island of Palmaria, whither numerous Christians had been banished. Some days after her arrival, the prefect of the place summoned all the Christians before him. He had Anastasia bound to a stake, and burned alive; then he put all the other Christians to death by means of various tortures. Among them was a man who had been despoiled of all his possessions, and who repeated over and over: 'Of Jesus Christ, at least, you will never be able to deprive me!' Saint Apollonia had the body of Saint Anastasia removed, and buried it in her garden, where a church was built in her honour. She was martyred under the reign of Diocletian, which began about the year of the Lord 287.

## SAINT STEPHEN

DECEMBER 26

Stephen is a Greek name; in Latin it means crown, in Hebrew it means rule. He was the crown of the martyrs, for he was their forerunner under the New Covenant, just as Abel had been their precursor under the Old. He was an exemplar, or rule: he showed how one should suffer for Christianity, how one should act and live, and how one should pray for one's enemies. Or again, Stephen comes from *strenue fans*, one who speaks with zeal. This he showed in his teaching and in his preaching of the word of God. Or Stephen comes from *strenue fans anus*, he who speaks with zeal to the aged. For he taught and ruled the widows over whom he was placed by the apostles, and they are the same as the aged. So Stephen is a crown or the beginning of martyrdom; a rule, because of his example of righteous conduct and of patience in suffering; a zealous preacher, because of his splendid and enlightened preaching; a zealous speaker to the aged because of his meritorious teaching of the widows.

Stephen was one of the seven deacons whom the apostles ordained for the sacred ministry. We know that as the number of the disciples increased, the Christians of Gentile origin began to murmur against those who had been Jews, because the widows were being neglected in the daily ministrations. These complaints can be taken in two ways: either the widows were not admitted to the ministry, or else they were too burdened with its works, the apostles having entrusted to them the material services of the cult, so that they might devote themselves entirely to preaching. However that may be, the apostles, confronted with these murmurings, called together the multitude of the disciples, and said: 'It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.' This saying was liked by all the multitude. They elected seven men, of whom Stephen was the first; these they set before the apostles, and they praying, imposed hands upon them.



Now Stephen, full of grace and fortitude, did great wonders and signs among the people. Then the Jews, being jealous of him and desiring to be rid of him, joined issue with him in three ways: by disputing with him, by suborning false witnesses against him, and by putting him to the torture. He, however, had the better of the disputes, exposed the fraud of the false witnesses, and triumphed over those who tortured him. In this threefold struggle, he received a threefold aid from Heaven. In the disputes he received the assistance of the Holy Ghost, Who gave him wisdom. Before the false witnesses, his face took on an angelic purity which gave the lie to their testimony. In his torture Christ appeared to him, helping him to bear martyrdom. As to the details of the discourse which he delivered to the Jews, we find it given at length in chapter seven of the *Acts of the Apostles*.

And while the Jews, hearing the saint's words, were carried away with rage and threatened him, Stephen being full of the Holy Ghost, and looking up steadfastly to Heaven, cried out: 'Behold I see the heavens opened, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God!' Then they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears, as if not to hear him blaspheming; and with one accord they ran violently upon him, and casting him forth without the city, they stoned him. And the two false witnesses, who were to throw the first stone, laid aside their garments, either to avoid soiling them by contact with Stephen, or to have more strength; and they placed them at the feet of a young man whose name was Saul, and who later became Saint Paul; with the result that he, by guarding the garments of those who were stoning Stephen in order to aid them in their business, can be considered as contributing to his lapidation. And while they were stoning him, Stephen prayed and said: 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!' Then, falling on his knees, he cried with a loud voice, saying: 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!' In this the martyr imitated Christ, Who, in His Passion, had prayed first for Himself, saying: 'Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit!' and then had prayed for his executioners, saying: 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!' And the author of the *Acts* adds that after having spoken thus, Stephen 'fell asleep in the Lord.' A right and true expression: for the saint did not die, but 'fell asleep' in the hope of resurrection.

Stephen's martyrdom took place the very year of the Ascension

of the Lord, the third of August. Saint Gamaliel and Nicodemus, who upheld the interests of the Christians in all the councils of the Jews, buried Saint Stephen in a plot belonging to Gamaliel, and a great mourning arose in his honour. And a violent persecution was directed soon after against all the Christians in Jerusalem, so that they had to disperse to the different quarters of Judea and of Samaria — all except the apostles, who went out to meet death instead of fleeing from it.

Saint Augustine relates that the blessed Stephen was glorified by numberless miracles. Seven times he brought back the dead to life, and cured a multitude of the sick. The same author asserts that the custom arose of laying flowers on the altar of Saint Stephen; which flowers healed the sick upon whom they were afterwards placed. Linens, likewise, laid on the altar and later applied to the sick, healed particularly the maladies of the bones. In the twenty-second book of the *City of God*, he reports the miracle of a blind woman who recovered her sight at the touch of a flower taken from the Saint's altar. He also tells the story of one of the leading men of the city of Hippo, who was called Martial. He was an infidel and refused to be converted. This man fell sick, and his son-in-law, who was a Christian, went to the church of Saint Stephen, took some flowers from the altar, and secretly put them under his father-in-law's pillow. When the latter awoke at the break of dawn, he sent for the bishop. The bishop being absent, a priest came to Martial's home, and Martial asked to be baptized. And as long as he lived, he repeated these words: 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!' without being aware that they were the last words of the Blessed Stephen.

Here is another miracle reported by Saint Augustine. A certain matron named Petronia, who had suffered for a long time from a serious illness, against which all remedies had failed, bethought herself to consult a Jew, who gave her a ring garnished with a stone, and told her to apply it to her bare flesh. Petronia followed his advice, but it did her no good. She repaired then to the church of the First Martyr, and asked Saint Stephen to cure her. At once the Jew's ring, which she had tied around her middle on a cord, fell to the ground albeit neither the cord nor the ring was broken. And on the instant the lady was healed.

Saint Augustine recounts another miracle, no less astounding than the last one. At Cæsarea of Cappadocia lived a noble lady who

was widowed, but who was blessed with ten children, of whom seven were boys and three were girls. One day the mother, feeling that her children had offended her, cursed them. Instantly the children, as a result of their mother's curse, were stricken with a dreadful ailment. Their limbs were afflicted with a trembling that left them neither by day nor by night. Not daring to let themselves be seen by their fellow citizens, they left the city, and wandered to different parts of the world; and everyone stared at them wherever they went. Two of them, a brother and a sister, named Paul and Palladia, reached Hippo, and told their story to Saint Augustine, who was bishop of that city. It was then ten days before Easter, and the afflicted pair betook themselves every morning to the church of Saint Stephen, beseeching the saint to have mercy on them. On Easter Day, before the whole assemblage, Paul suddenly entered the chapel of the saint, and prostrated himself devoutly before the altar; and then everyone saw him rise completely cured, and his trembling never began again. Then his sister Palladia entered the chapel in her turn, and appeared to be overcome all at once by a slumber, from which she awakened entirely healed. The brother and sister were shown to the congregation, and a great chorus of thanksgiving was addressed to Saint Stephen for their cure.

We have forgotten to say that Orosius, returning from a visit to Saint Jerome, had brought back some relics of Saint Stephen to Saint Augustine, and that it was these relics that effected the miracles of which we have spoken, and many others besides.

We should recall, finally, that it was not on the 26th of December that Saint Stephen was martyred, but on the 3rd of August, the day when the Church celebrates the Invention of the saint. The reason for this we shall explain when we come to speak of the Invention. We may say here, however, that there is a double reason for which the Church has placed the three feasts of Saint John the Evangelist, Saint Stephen, and the Holy Innocents, immediately after the Nativity of Our Lord. Firstly, the Church wished to place Christ and His first companions together. Secondly, the Church wished to group the three kinds of martyrs close to the Birth of Christ, which is the first reason for all martyrdom. For there are three sorts of martyrdom: the first is that which is willed and accomplished, the second that which is willed and not accomplished, the third that which is accomplished without being willed. The

first of these martyrdoms was earliest represented by Saint Stephen, the second by Saint John, the third by the Holy Innocents.

## SAINT JOHN THE EVANGELIST

DECEMBER 27

John means the Lord's grace; or, he who is in grace; or, he to whom it has been given; or, he to whom a present has been given by God. In these four interpretations of the name John, we see the four divine gifts which he possessed. The first is the extraordinary love God had for Saint John, for God loved him more than He did the other apostles, and gave him many secret signs of His love; he is called the Lord's grace, because the Lord was gracious to him. Yes, Christ loved him more than he did Peter. For there is a love of the heart and a love of manifestation; and although the Lord loved John and Peter equally with His heart, He showed His love in a different manner. To John He gave more of His intimate confidences, while He conferred more external benefits upon Peter. The life of Saint John the Evangelist was written by Miletus, Bishop of Laodicea. A summary of it was made by Isidore, in his *Life and Death of the Saints*.

When, after Pentecost, the apostles separated, John the Apostle and Evangelist went to Asia, and there founded many churches. The Emperor Domitian, hearing of his fame, summoned him to Rome, and had him plunged into a cauldron of boiling oil which was set up before the gate called the Porta Latina; but the saint came forth untouched, just as he had escaped the corruption of the senses. Seeing which, the emperor exiled him to the island of Patmos, where, living alone, he wrote the *Apocalypse*. But the cruel emperor was slain that same year, and the Senate revoked all his decrees. Thus it came about that Saint John, who had been deported as a criminal, returned to Ephesus covered with glory: the multitude ran out to meet him, crying: 'Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!' And as he entered the city, he met a procession which accompanied the mortal remains of a woman named Drusiana, who of old had been his most devoted friend, and more than anyone else had looked forward to his return. The kinsmen of this woman,

and the orphans and widows of Ephesus, said to Saint John: 'Here we are about to bury Drusiana, who, in accordance with thy monitions, ever nourished us with the divine word, and yearned more than any other for thy return, saying: "Ah, if I might see the Apostle of God once more before I die!" And now thou art come back and she was not able to see thee.' Then the apostle ordered them to set down the coffin and open it; and he said: 'Drusiana, my Master Jesus Christ raises thee to life! Arise, go into thy house, and prepare my repast!' And at once she arose and went off to her house, thinking that she had awakened from sleep, and not from death.

The day following the arrival of Saint John at Ephesus, a philosopher whose name was Crato called the people together on the public square, to show them how they should despise the world. He had commanded two very rich young men to sell their entire heritage, and to buy in exchange certain diamonds of great price; and then, at his order, the young men smashed their diamonds to pieces before the eyes of all. The apostle, however, chanced to pass by, and he called the philosopher, and showed him how blameworthy was his manner of despising the world. For, said he, the contempt of riches is meritorious only when the rejected riches benefit the poor, wherefore the Lord said to the young man of the Gospel: 'If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor!' Then said Crato to him: 'If thy master truly be God, and if He will that the price of these diamonds benefit the poor, then do thou make them whole again, thus accomplishing for the glory of thy Master what I have accomplished for human glory.' Then Saint John gathered the fragments of the diamonds in his hand, and prayed; and instantly the stones took the form which they had had before being broken. And the philosopher and the two young men believed in Jesus, and the diamonds were sold, and the proceeds given to the poor.

Two other young men, seeing this, sold all their worldly possessions, gave their money to the poor, and followed the apostle. But one day, these two young men, seeing their former slaves arrayed in precious robes, while they themselves were clothed in beggars' rags, began to be discontented. Seeing this in their faces, Saint John had some reeds and stones brought to him from the seashore, and changed them into gold and diamonds. Then, upon his order,

the goldsmiths of the city examined the gold and the diamonds for seven days, and declared that they had never seen any so pure. Whereupon the saint said to the young men: 'Go and buy back the land which you sold! Since you have lost the treasures of Heaven, be flourishing, but only to wither; be rich for a time, but only to be beggars for eternity!' Then he began to speak about riches, enumerating the six reasons which should dissuade us from the immoderate desire of earthly goods. The first of these motives is the written Word, and Saint John related the story of the rich man and Lazarus the poor man. The second motive is nature itself: man is born naked and dies naked. The third motive is the creation: for just as the sun, the moon, the stars, and the air, are common to all and all share their benefits, so among men everything should be held in common. The fourth motive is the uncertainty of riches. For the rich man is the slave of his money; he does not possess it, but it possesses him: and he is a slave to the Devil; for the Gospel says that a rich man is the slave of mammon. The fifth motive is the care and worry which riches impose: for men toil night and day to acquire riches, and live in fear lest they lose them. Finally, the sixth motive is the evil consequences which ensue from the possession of wealth, in this life as well as in the next.

While Saint John was speaking in these terms against riches, he met the funeral cortege of a young man, who had died thirty days after marriage. Then the mother and the widow of the young man, and all his friends, threw themselves at the apostle's feet, and besought him to raise the dead man to life, in the name of God, as he had raised Drusiana. And the Apostle, after praying for a long time, revived the young man, and told him to make known to the two wealthy youths the penalty which they had incurred and the glory which they had lost. Then the man who had been brought back to life spoke of the glory of Paradise and of the pains of Hell, which he had just seen with his own eyes. He told the two rich young men that they had lost everlasting palaces, built of precious stones, filled with a marvellous light, furnished with delicate viands, and replete with everlasting joys and delights. Then he told them of the eight pains of Hell, which are brought together in the verse:

*Vermes et tenebræ flagellum frigus et ignis  
Dæmonis adspectus scelerum confusio luctus*

which means: the worms, the darkness, the whip, the cold, the fire, the sight of the devil, remorse, and despair. Then he added, addressing the two rich men: 'And I saw your guardian angels weeping and lamenting. Oh miserable ones that you are!' Then the three prostrated themselves at the knees of the apostle, and prayed him to call down the pardon of Heaven. And the apostle said to the two young men: 'Do penance for thirty days, and pray that the sticks and stones return to their former shape.' They did this; and the reeds and stones became as before, and the rich youths obtained their pardon.

When Saint John had preached throughout Asia, the idolators dragged him to the temple of Diana, and tried to force him to offer sacrifice to the goddess. Then the saint proposed this alternative to them: he said that if, by calling on Diana, they succeeded in overthrowing the church of Christ, he would offer sacrifice to Diana; but if on the contrary, by calling upon Christ, he destroyed the temple of Diana, they would have to believe in Christ. The greater number of the people agreed to his trial. John then ordered out of the temple all who were within; and when he prayed, the temple fell to the ground, and the statue of Diana was reduced to dust.

Thereupon the high priest Aristodemus incited a sedition among the populace, until the two parties were at the point of coming to blows. And the apostle said to him: 'What must I do to appease thee?' He answered: 'If thou wishest me to believe in thy God, I will give thee poison to drink; and if it does thee no harm, thy God will be the true God.' The apostle said: 'Do as thou hast said.' And he replied: 'But first I wish thee to see other men die of the effects of this poison, that thou mayest know its power.' And Aristodemus asked the proconsul to hand over two condemned men to him: he gave them poison to drink, and they fell dead on the spot. Then the apostle took the cup in his turn; and making the sign of the cross over it, he drank all the poison, and felt no ill effect: and all began to praise God. But Aristodemus said: 'I still have a doubt; but if you restore to life the two men who died of the poison, I shall doubt no longer, and shall believe in Christ.' The apostle, without answering a word, gave him his mantle. And he said: 'Why dost thou give me thy mantle? Thinkest thou that it will transmit thy faith to me?' Said Saint John: 'Go and spread this mantle over the corpses of the two dead men, and say, "The apostle

of Christ sends me to you, that you may rise in the name of Christ.”’ Aristodemus did as he was bidden, and straightway the dead men arose. Then the apostle baptized the high priest and the proconsul with his whole family; and they, at a later time, raised a church in honour of Saint John.

Saint Clement relates, as we can read in the *Ecclesiastical History*, that one day Saint John converted a comely and audacious young man, and left him in the care of a bishop, as a trust. Some time later, however, the young man abandoned the bishop to become the leader of a band of brigands. And when, later on, the apostle asked the bishop to return his trust, the bishop answered: ‘My venerable father, the man is dead, at least so far as his soul is concerned; for now he dwells upon a mountain top, with the brigands whose leader he has become.’ Hearing this, the apostle tore his mantle, and beat himself upon the head with his fists; and straightway he had a horse saddled, and rode off, without an escort, toward the mountain where the brigand was. But the latter, overcome with shame at the sight of him, mounted his horse and made off. Then the apostle, forgetful of his age, set out in pursuit, crying: ‘What, beloved son, dost thou flee thy father, an old man, unarmed? Fear naught, my son, for I shall account for thee to Christ, and I promise that I shall willingly die for thee, in like manner as Christ has died for us. Come back, my son, come back! The Lord Himself has sent me!’ Hearing these words, the young man turned back, drew near the saint, and burst into tears. Then the apostle threw himself at his feet, took his hand, and covered it with kisses. And he prayed and fasted for him, and obtained his pardon. And some time later he ordained him a bishop.

One day Saint John was given a live partridge. And as the saint was caressing it with his hand, a youth said laughingly to his comrades: ‘Look at the old man playing with a bird, like a child.’ Then Saint John, guessing the boy’s thoughts, called him and asked why he held a bow and arrow in his hand. The boy answered: ‘To shoot birds in flight.’ The apostle said: ‘How dost thou that?’ The boy stretched his bow, and held it taut in his hand: but as the apostle said nothing, he was not slow to slacken his bow. Then said Saint John: ‘My son, why hast thou loosened thy bow?’ He replied: ‘If I held it taut any longer, it would become too weak to launch the arrows.’ And the apostle said: ‘And in like manner,



our human nature would become too weak for contemplation if, persisting in its severity, it refused to yield at times to its fragility. Knowest thou not that the eagle, which flies higher than any other bird, and looks straight into the sun, must, nevertheless, by its very nature, come back to earth? So likewise the human spirit, after relaxing a little from the contemplation of heavenly things, returns to it with renewed ardour.'

Saint Jerome recounts as follows: Saint John, who remained in Ephesus into his extreme old age, grew so feeble that his disciples had to carry him to the church, and he could scarcely open his mouth. Yet at every step he repeated one and the same phrase: 'My children, love one another!' One day, however, the faithful, surprised that he always repeated the same thing, asked him the reason for it. And the saint answered: 'Because it is the great commandment of the Lord; and if one only fulfils this, it is enough.'

Helinandus asserts that when Saint John was about to write his gospel, he first ordered the faithful to fast and to pray, that he might be inspired by God. And then, when he retired to the solitary spot where he was to write the divine book, he prayed that the book might be protected against the ravages of the wind and rain. And it is said that even today this spot is spared by the elements.

Finally, here is what we read in the book of Isidore: When Saint John had reached the age of ninety-nine years, the sixty-seventh year of the Passion of the Lord, Jesus appeared to him with His disciples and said: 'Come to me, My well-beloved, for the time has come when thou shalt sit at table with Me and with thy brethren!' And Saint John rose up and prepared to go. But Jesus said to him: 'No, thou shalt come to Me on Sunday.' Therefore, on the following Sunday, the whole populace gathered in the church. And Saint John, recovering his vigour, preached from the crowing of the cock, telling them to be strong in the faith and fervent in carrying out the commands of Christ. After which he had a square grave dug near the altar, and saw that the earth was carried outside the church. Then, going down into the grave, and raising his hands to Heaven, he said: 'Thou hast invited me to Thy table, Lord; and behold I come, thanking Thee for having invited me, for Thou knowest that I have desired it with all my heart.' When he had made this prayer, a blinding light surrounded him. And when the light faded away, the saint had vanished, and the grave was filled with manna; and

it is said that even today this manna issues from the grave, as if it were a spring.

Saint Edmund, King of England, used never to refuse anything that was asked of him in the name of Saint John. One day, in the absence of the king's chamberlain, a certain pilgrim approached Edmund, and asked him for alms in the name of Saint John the Evangelist. And the king, having nothing else to give him, gave him the precious ring which he wore on his finger. Some time later, an English soldier who was overseas met the same pilgrim, and the latter returned the ring to him, telling him to carry it to his king with these words: 'He for whose love thou hast given this ring, returns it to thee.' Whence it was clearly evident that it was Saint John himself who had appeared to the king in the guise of a pilgrim.

Isidore wrote in his *Life and Death of the Saints*: 'John changed sticks into gold, and the pebbles of the beach into precious stones; he made broken jewels whole; at his command the widow awoke, the youth arose and the soul returned to the body; unharmed he drank the poison and restored life to them whom the poison had killed.'

## THE HOLY INNOCENTS

DECEMBER 28

The Holy Innocents are so called for three reasons: namely, by reason of their life, by reason of their martyrdom, and by reason of the innocence which their death procured for them. They are innocent by reason of their life, because they had an innocent life; that is, they were unable, while alive, to do ill to anyone. They are innocent by reason of their martyrdom, because they suffered unjustly, and without being guilty of any crime. Finally they are innocent by the effects of their death, because their martyrdom conferred baptismal innocence upon them; in other words, it purified them of original sin.

The Holy Innocents were put to death by Herod of Ascalon. The Holy Scriptures mention three Herods, all three renowned for their cruelty. The first is called Herod of Ascalon; during his reign the Lord was born and the Innocents put to death. The second is called Herod Antipas: it was he who ordered the beheading of



et sic puerum n-  
matis nobilissimū  
puerum uocatus  
dum ap' figuram r  
patre nre orbatu  
cer sub cura diomfi  
patris sui relictus ē  
ambo romam ubi

[illegible]

**I**s non maliciā mēdāq; erat et  
interitum minime ignorabat  
to g' iusticie inter iudicis ambo; ad al  
tare s'ci petri cedunt. ubi tēp' tēp' in

[illegible][illegible][illegible]

de sco urbano. R.  
Natus calixtus pape  
fractis annis amge  
am fuit maxima  
plena xpianus in  
tem alexander annis  
mas hamear xpiana  
erat qm ongenes co



Saint John. Finally, the third is Herod Agrippa, who put Saint James to death and imprisoned Saint Peter. All this is contained in the following verse:

*Ascalonita necat pueros, Antipa Johannem,  
Agrippa Jacobum, claudens in carcere Petrum.*

But let us review briefly the story of the first of these Herods. Antipater the Idumæan, as we read in the *Ecclesiastical History*, married a niece of the king of the Arabs and had of her a son, whom he called Herod, and who later was surnamed Herod of Ascalon. He was made king of Judea by Cæsar Augustus, this being the first time that Judea was ruled by a foreigner. In his turn this Herod had six sons: Antipater, Alexander, Aristobulus, Archelaus, Herod Antipas, and Philip. Alexander and Aristobulus, born of the same mother, who was a Jewess, were sent to Rome as youths, to be instructed in the liberal arts. Then they came back to Jerusalem, and Alexander became a grammarian, while Aristobulus distinguished himself by his subtle eloquence. They often quarrelled with their father over the succession to the throne. Then, since their father, angry with them, threatened to disinherit them, they undertook to have him killed. Herod was forewarned, and drove them out; and the two young princes went to Rome, and presented to the emperor a complaint against their father.

Meanwhile the Magi came to Jerusalem, inquiring about the birth of the new king, which signs and omens had made known to them. And Herod, hearing them, feared that from the family of the true kings of Judea a son might have been born, who could expel him as a usurper. He asked therefore that the Magi return and bring him word of the royal child as soon as they had found him, pretending that he too wished to adore the one whom in reality he wished to kill. But the Magi went back another way into their country. And Herod, when he saw that they did not return, thought that they had been ashamed of being deceived by the star, and had gone back without daring to see him again; and thereupon he decided not to seek further for the child. Nevertheless, when he heard what the shepherds had told and what Simeon and Anna had prophesied, all his fears returned, and he determined to massacre all the children of Bethlehem, so that the unknown child whom he feared would be sure to perish.

But Joseph was warned by an angel, and retired with the Child and His mother into Egypt, to the city of Hieropolis, where he stayed for seven years, until the death of Herod. And when Our Lord came into Egypt, all the idols in the land were destroyed, as had been foretold by the prophet Isaías. It is also said that just as in the case of the flight of the children of Israel out of Egypt, when there was no house in which the first-born had not been slain by the wrath of God, so now there was no temple in which the idol was not destroyed. And Cassiodorus tells us, in his *Tripartite History*, that at Hermopolis in Thebais can be seen a tree called *persidis*, which cures sicknesses, if one of its fruits, or a leaf, or a piece of its bark is applied to the neck of the sick person. When the Blessed Virgin was fleeing into Egypt with her Son, this tree bent down to the ground, and piously adored the Christ.

However, while Herod was thinking over the massacre of the children, he himself was summoned by letter to appear before Augustus, and to answer the accusations of his two sons. And after he had argued with his sons in the emperor's presence, the latter decided that the sons should in all things obey their father, who was free to leave his throne to whomever he wished. It was then that Herod, returned from Rome, and emboldened by the confirmation of the emperor's favour, ordered that all the men-children from two years old and under be killed. This order is easily explained if we remember that, since Herod's journey to Rome had lasted a year, a space of two years must have passed since the moment when the star had revealed the birth of the royal Child to the Magi. But Saint Chrysostom believes that Herod's decree commanded, on the contrary, the slaying of all children over two years of age. For according to him, the star appeared to the Magi a year before the birth of Jesus; moreover, Herod had spent a year in Rome, and doubtless thought that the Child had already been born when the Magi saw the star. The fact is that certain bones of the Holy Innocents, which have been preserved, are too large to come from children of less than two years of age; although one might still say that the human frame was much larger then than it is today. As for Herod, he was speedily punished for his crime; for Macrobius and another chronicler report that a son of Herod, of nursing age, happened at that time to be at Bethlehem, and was slain with the other children.

But God, the Judge of judges, did not allow that the punish-

ment of such a crime be limited to this single death. The man who had deprived countless fathers of their sons, was himself miserably deprived of his own.

Alexander and Aristobulus came again under their father's suspicion. One of their accomplices revealed that Alexander had promised him many gifts if he succeeded in poisoning his father. Moreover, Herod's barber made known that Alexander had promised to reward him, if he would slit his father's throat while he was shaving him. Therefore Herod, in his wrath, had them put to death. Then he took the succession to the throne from his eldest son, Antipater, in favour of his other son Herod Antipas. Antipater, in addition, had a paternal affection for the children of Aristobulus, Herod Agrippa and Herodias, the wife of his son Philip. He therefore conceived for his father a hatred so violent that he tried to poison him; and Herod learned of this, and threw him into prison. It was on this occasion that Cæsar Augustus said to his intimates: 'I would rather be Herod's swine than his son; because as a Jew he spares his swine, but he kills his sons.'

As for Herod himself, he was about seventy years of age when he was stricken with a grave sickness. He had a violent fever, decomposition of the flesh, an inflammation of the feet, worms in the testes, shortness of breath, and an unbearable stench. His physicians placed him in a bath of oil, but he was taken out almost dead. Then, hearing that the Jews were awaiting the moment of his death with joyful eagerness, he had young men of the noblest families of the kingdom thrown into prison, and said to his sister Salome: 'I know that the Jews will rejoice at my death: but many of them will grieve for it if thou wilt heed my suggestion, and cut the throats of all whom I hold in prison as soon as I am dead. In that way, all Judea will mourn me, even unwillingly.'

After every meal he used to eat an apple, which he peeled for himself. Since he was tortured by a dreadful cough, he one day turned against his breast the knife that he used to peel his apple. But one of his nephews seized his hand, and prevented him from killing himself. However, the whole court, believing him dead, raised a great cry: and Antipater rejoiced mightily in his prison, and promised to reward his guardians if they would set him free. Hearing this, Herod ordered his soldiers to put his son to death, and named Archelaus in his stead. He died five days later. He had

been very fortunate in his political career, but very unfortunate in his private life. Salome, his sister, set at liberty all those whom the king had ordered her to kill. At least that is what we read in the *Scholastic History*. But Remy, in his Commentary on Saint Matthew, says, to the contrary, that Herod stabbed himself with the knife which he used to peel his fruit, and that Salome, his sister, put to death all those whom he had thrown into prison, as she had been counselled to do by her brother.

## SAINT THOMAS OF CANTERBURY

DECEMBER 29

Thomas means depth, or twofold, or cut down. And indeed, there was depth in his great humility, for we read that he wore a shirt of haircloth and washed the feet of the poor; he was twofold in his office, for he taught the people with words and good deeds; he was cut down in his martyrdom.

Thomas of Canterbury, while he was at the court of the King of England, was witness to many acts which were contrary to the good of religion. He left the court therefore, and took refuge with the bishop of Canterbury, who ordained him archdeacon. But later, at the bishop's request, he accepted the office of chancellor to the king, in order that the wisdom with which he was endowed might enable him to halt the attacks of evil men upon the Church. And the king conceived so strong an affection for him that at the death of the Archbishop of Canterbury, he offered to nominate Thomas in his place. After long resistance Thomas bowed his shoulders to receive the archiepiscopal mantle, so great was his obedience. And at once the dignity of his office made of him a new, and absolutely perfect man. He began to mortify his flesh by fasting and with the hair-shirt, with which he covered not only the upper part of his body, but even his legs down to the knees. And so carefully did he conceal his holiness that his outer dress was like that of the other bishops, and nothing disclosed the austerity of his private life. And every day he went upon his knees and washed the feet of thirteen poor men, whom afterwards he fed, and to whom he gave four pennies of silver.



But the king made every effort to bend him to his own will, at the expense of the Church. He desired that Thomas should approve, in the manner of his predecessors, certain royal practices which were contrary to the liberties of the Church. And as the new archbishop refused to do so, he drew upon himself the wrath of the king and the nobles. One day, the king insisted so strongly with him and with the other bishops, even threatening them with death, that he, deceived by the advice of the chief men of the State, gave his approval to the king's wishes. But when he saw the danger to souls which would ensue from his action, he determined to punish himself, and renounced the ministry of the altar, until such time as the sovereign pontiff should deem him worthy to return to his office. And when the king demanded that he confirm in writing what he had approved in words, he refused courageously, and went off holding his cross aloft, followed by the cries of the impious who clamoured for his death. And two knights who were faithful to him came in tears to make known to him, under oath, that several knights were plotting his death. Whereupon the man of God, fearing more for the Church than for himself, took flight, and was welcomed at Sens by Pope Alexander, who ordered him to enter the monastery of Pontigny. But the King had sent to Rome to demand that a legate should come and settle this difference, and the demand was denied; hence his anger toward the archbishop knew no bounds. He laid hands on all that belonged to Thomas and his kin, and condemned the entire family to exile, without consideration of age, sex, or condition.

In the meantime the bishop prayed daily for the king and for England. One day it was revealed to him by Heaven that the time was drawing near when he must return to his church, and that Christ would soon hold forth to him the palm of martyrdom. And the outcome was that after seven years of exile, he was recalled to England, and received with the highest honours.

Some days before the martyrdom of the saint, a young man who had been miraculously brought back to life, told that his soul had been admitted to the Holy of Holies, and that there, in the midst of the Apostles, he had seen an empty throne; and an angel had told him that this throne was reserved for a high dignitary of the English church.

A certain priest who celebrated Mass daily in honour of the

Blessed Virgin, was denounced to the archbishop, and he, judging the priest to be witless and without conscience, suspended him from his charge. Meanwhile Saint Thomas had to mend his hair-shirt, and hid it under his bed until he could do so. And the Blessed Virgin appeared to the priest, and said: 'Go to the archbishop, and tell him that She for whose love thou didst celebrate Mass has mended his hair-shirt, which is beneath his bed; and tell him that she sends thee to him, that he may lift the interdict which he has laid upon thee!' And Saint Thomas discovered that his hair-shirt had indeed been mended. He lifted the interdict from the priest, begging him not to reveal the secret of the hair-shirt which he wore.

And, in the same manner as in the past, he defended the rights of the Church, the king being unable to move him by pleading or by force. Then the king, seeing that he could not sway him, sent soldiers in arms after him; and these, entering the cathedral, loudly asked where the archbishop was. He came to meet them, and said: 'Here I am! What do you desire of me?' And they replied: 'We have come to kill thee; thy last hour has come!' Then he said to them: 'I am ready to die for God, and to defend justice, and to protect the liberties of the Church. But since you seek only me, I adjure you, by the almighty God, and under pain of anathema, to do no harm to any of my priests! As for me, I recommend the Church and I recommend myself to God, the Blessed Virgin, Dionysius, and to all the saints.' Having spoken these words, he bowed his venerable head to the sword of the wicked, and they sundered the top of his skull, scattering his brains upon the pavement of the temple. Thus Saint Thomas died a martyr's death, in the year of the Lord 1174.

At the moment when his clergy was about to chant for him the *Requiem æternam*, the Mass of the Dead, it is said that a choir of angels came and interrupted the singers, and began to chant the Mass of the Martyrs, *Lætabitur justus in Domino*. This truly singular honour was well merited by a saint who had given his life for the Church, in the church, during the Mass, surrounded by his clergy!

And God has deigned to work many another miracle by the intercession of this saint, restoring sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, the power of walking to the halt, and life to the dead. Many a

sick man has been healed by touching the water which was used to wash the cloths stained with the blood of Saint Thomas.

A certain English lady, through vanity and a desire to be more alluring, wished to have dark eyes, and for this intention made a vow to go barefoot to the tomb of Saint Thomas. But when, after prostrating herself in prayer, she arose, she realized that she had become completely blind. At once, filled with remorse, she besought Saint Thomas, not indeed to give her other eyes, but to restore her sight. And in the end she obtained it, but only with great difficulty.

A certain knave was ordered to bring some of Saint Thomas' water to his master, but he brought ordinary water instead in a wooden pail, and placed it before his lord who was sitting at table. And the lord said to him: 'If thou hast never stolen from me, then Saint Thomas will let thee bring this water to me, but if thou art a thief may the water disappear.' The knave was content, for he knew that he had just filled the pail with water. Then a great miracle occurred: for when the pail was uncovered not a drop of water was to be found. And the knave stood there astounded, for he had been proven a liar and a thief.

A bird who was learned and knew how to speak, saw himself one day pursued by a hawk: and he repeated a phrase which he had been taught: 'Saint Thomas, come to my aid!' Instantly the hawk fell dead, and the other bird was saved.

A certain man, whom Saint Thomas had loved much, fell into an illness, and went to the saint's tomb to pray for his health, which was restored to him. But as he returned to his house cured of every ill, the thought came to him that perhaps the healing of his body was not conducive to the good of his soul. He went back therefore to the saint's tomb, and prayed that if his cure was not useful to his soul, his sickness might return to him. And straightway he fell ill as before.

As for the saint's assassins, the vengeance of Heaven overwhelmed them. Some of them gnawed off their fingers with their teeth, some rotted alive, others were paralysed, and others lost their reason.

## SAINT SYLVESTER

DECEMBER 31

Sylvester comes from *sile*, light, and *terra*, earth, and the name means the light of the earth, that is, the Church; but the Church, like all good earth, is rich in good deeds, black in humility, sweet in piety. For as Palladius says, these are the three signs of good earth. Or, Sylvester comes from *silva*, forest, and *trahens*, attracting; because he attracted the men of the forests, the uncouth and savage heathen, to the faith. Or, as we read in the *Glossary*, Sylvester means the green one, the countryman, the shadowy one, the sylvan one. He flourished in heavenly contemplation, he was a countryman for he cultivated himself, he was the shadowy one for he was cool in the heat of all desires of the flesh, he was the sylvan one for he is planted among the trees of heaven.

The life of Saint Sylvester was compiled by Eusebius of Cæsarea. Saint Blaise, at a council of seventy bishops, recommended the reading of it to Catholics, as is written in the decree.

Sylvester's mother was a woman called Justa, who was not less just in deed than in name. He was instructed by the holy priest Cyrinus, and early had a great love of hospitality. He welcomed to his home a Christian named Timothy, whom no one was willing to receive, for fear of being persecuted. This Timothy preached there for a year without ceasing, after which he received the crown of martyrdom. Now the prefect Tarquin, believing that Timothy was very rich, demanded his wealth of Sylvester, threatening him with death if he did not hand it over. And when he ascertained that Timothy had been poor in earthly possessions, he ordered Sylvester to sacrifice to the idols, failing which he would undergo all sorts of tortures on the morrow. And Sylvester said to him: 'Thou fool, this very night thou thyself shalt die and suffer the eternal torments of Hell, and shalt be forced to acknowledge, willing or no, that the God Whom we adore is the one true God!' Thereupon Sylvester was thrown into prison, and Tarquin betook himself to a banquet to which he was invited. However, while he was eating, a fishbone caught in his throat, in such a way that he could neither swallow it nor spit it out. Thus he died that night, and was carried to his grave with much lamentation, and Sylvester emerged from

the prison, to the great joy of all; for he was beloved not only of the Christians but of the pagans. And in good sooth he was angelic of face, eloquent in speech, pure of body, holy in works, of great intelligence, zealous in the faith, patient in hope, and abounding in charity.

And when Melchiades, the Bishop of Rome, died, the whole populace elected Sylvester to be his successor, much against his will. Having thus become sovereign pontiff, Sylvester drew up a list of all orphans, widows, and poor folk, and ordered that provision be made for the needs of all. He instituted the fast of Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, and decreed that Thursday as well as Sunday should be devoted to the Lord. But the Greeks objected to this and said that Saturday should be more hallowed than Thursday. Sylvester replied that this was not so, and that it had been the custom from the time of the Apostles to mourn on Saturday because of the burial of Our Lord. They answered: 'The burial of the Lord occurred on but one Saturday, and therefore it should be kept with fasting only once a year.' Said Sylvester: 'Just as all Sundays betoken the resurrection of the Lord, so all Saturdays should commemorate His burial.' In this they obeyed him, but they continued to oppose Thursdays, saying that this was not in keeping with the Christian faith. Then he pointed out to them the reasons for keeping Thursdays, and they were three in number: because it was on that day that Jesus ascended into Heaven, that He instituted the sacrament of His Body and Blood, and that the Church prepares and blesses the Holy Chrism. And so he overcame their scruples, and they all became obedient to him.

At that time Constantine was emperor and began to persecute the Christians; and Sylvester left Rome and retired with his clergy to a nearby mountain. But it came about that Constantine himself, as a punishment for his persecution, was stricken with an incurable leprosy. The priests of the idols then counselled him to have three thousand children slaughtered at the gates of the city, and to bathe in their warm blood. But when he arrived at the place where the children were gathered, Constantine saw their mothers running toward him, their hair dishevelled, weeping and lamenting. Then, with tears streaming down his cheeks, he stopped his chariot, and standing erect, he said: 'Counts, knights, and common folk here present, hear ye! The dignity of the Roman People is born

of the pity which has always ruled our way of life; and of old this pity caused it to be decreed that anyone who slew a child in war, should be put to death. But what cruelty would it be, if we wrought upon our own children that which we do not allow to be done even to the children of our enemies? Of what use would it be to have conquered the barbarians, if we allowed ourselves to be conquered by our own brutality? Therefore, in the present circumstance, let pity rule! It is better that I die, and spare the life of these innocents, than that I preserve, by their death, a life stained with cruelty!' And he ordered that the children be returned to their mothers and sent home with gifts; in such wise that the mothers, who had come forth weeping in anguish, went to their homes weeping for joy.

The emperor shut himself up in his palace, resigning himself to die of his malady. But the following night Saint Peter and Saint Paul appeared to him and said: 'Because thou hast refused to shed innocent blood, Our Lord Jesus Christ has sent us here to show thee a way to recover thy health! Summon before thee Sylvester the bishop, who is in hiding on Mount Soracte. He will point out a spring wherein thou art to immerse thyself three times, and thou shalt be cured of thy leprosy. But in return, thou art to destroy the temples of the idols, and to reopen the churches of the Christ; and thou thyself art to be His servant henceforth!' At once, Constantine, awakening, sent a company in search of Sylvester.

And Sylvester, seeing this company approaching, thought that he was called to the palm of martyrdom. He therefore came forward courageously, after recommending himself to God, and delivering a final exhortation to his companions. And Constantine said to him: 'Be thou welcome! We are overjoyed at thy coming!' And he related his whole dream. Thereafter he asked him who the two gods were who had appeared to him: and Sylvester answered that they were not gods, but apostles of Christ. Then he ordered the portraits of the apostles to be brought in, and Constantine immediately recognized Saint Peter and Saint Paul. Sylvester then received him as a catechumen, imposed a seven days' fast upon him, and prescribed that he should throw open all the prisons. And when Constantine had descended into the waters of baptism, a great light surrounded him, and he emerged cleansed of the leprosy, and said that he had seen Christ in Heaven. In the seven days following his baptism, he issued seven memorable laws. The first day, he

decreed that Christ should be adored by the Romans as the true God; the second day, that every blasphemy against Christ would be punished; the third day, that any insult to a Christian would entail confiscation of half the goods of the offending party; the fourth day, that, as the emperor is the ruler of the world, so the Pope of Rome should be the ruler of all the other bishops; the fifth day, that any man who took refuge in a church should find sanctuary therein; the sixth day, that no one might build a church in a town without the permission of his bishop; the seventh day, that the tenth part of the royal goods would be devoted to the construction of churches. On the eighth day the emperor betook himself to the church of Saint Peter, and confessed his sins aloud. Then, taking a spade, he was the first to dig the earth at the spot where the new basilica was to rise; and he shouldered twelve baskets of earth, and carried them out of the church.

The Empress Helena, mother of Constantine, was at that time in Bethany: and when she heard of his conversion, she wrote to praise him for having renounced the worship of idols, but also to reproach him sharply because, instead of believing in the God of the Jews, he had now adored a crucified man as God. The emperor responded that she should bring the chief Jewish doctors with her to Rome, adding that he would confront them with the Christian doctors, in order that their discussion might bring out the truth in matters of belief. Helena therefore brought back with her one hundred and forty-one Jewish doctors, of whom twelve shone especially for their learning and their eloquence. And when Sylvester and his clergy came before the emperor to dispute with the Jews, it was agreed by common accord to accept as arbiters two very learned and esteemed pagans, called Crato and Zenophilus. These decreed that when one stood up and spoke the others were to remain silent.

Then Abiathar, the first of the twelve Jewish masters, began, saying: 'The Christians call upon three gods, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. From this it is apparent that they transgress the law which says: "See ye that I alone am, and there is no other God besides me." They also say that Christ is God because he wrought many miracles; in our law too there are many who have performed miracles and great things, and yet they did not have the arrogance to call themselves God, as does Christ whom Sylvester worships.' Sylvester replied: 'We do not have more than one God, but we do

not think him to be so lonely that He could not have the joy of possessing a Son. But we will prove to you from your own books the trinity of the Persons. We call God the Father; for the Psalm says, "He shall cry out to me: Thou art my Father." We call Him Son, for the Psalm also says, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." We call Him the Holy Ghost for again it is written: "By the word of the Lord the heavens were established; and all the power of them by the spirit of his mouth!" We also have the plurality of the Persons, and the oneness of the nature, in that God said, "Let us make man to our image, and likeness." Although there are three Persons, there is only one God; and we can prove this by an example. And he took the emperor's purple mantle in his hand and spoke: 'See, I will make three folds in it,' and then he smoothed out the cloth saying, 'See, how the three folds were but one cloth. And even so God is a trinity and yet only one nature. Again, Abiathar has said that miracles do not make a god, and that there were many of his people who had performed miracles and yet had not called themselves God as Christ did. But surely He showed himself to be God: for God at no time permitted any to lift themselves up wantonly against Him, without wreaking dire punishment upon them. This we see in the story of Dathan and Abiron, and many more. How then could Christ lie and call Himself God, if it were not true, since God's vengeance did not strike him, yea, God's power worked in Him always?' Then the judges gave their verdict saying, 'It is apparent that Abiathar has been confounded by Sylvester; for reason teaches that Christ could not have restored life to the dead merely by calling himself God if He were not actually God.'

Since Abiathar had been overcome, the second master, Jonas by name, arose, and said: 'Abraham was commanded by God to circumcise himself and his sons, and thereby they were justified before God; therefore whoever is not circumcised is not justified.' Sylvester replied: 'We know that Abraham was pleasing to God and was called God's friend before he was circumcised; from which we see that it was not circumcision which justified him, but his faith and his upright life. For he did not receive the circumcision for sanctification, but to distinguish him.' Thus Jonas too was confounded.

Then the third arose, Godolias by name, and said: 'How can your Jesus be God, since He was born, tempted by the Devil, betrayed,



stripped, quenched with gall, bound, and buried? These things may not be in God.' Sylvester made answer, 'All that happened to our God was prophesied in your Books. Of His birth Isaias says, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel." Of His temptation Zacharias said, "And the Lord showed me Jesus the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord and Satan stood at his right hand to be his adversary." Of His betrayal David says, "For even the man of my peace, in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, hath greatly supplanted me." There also it is said, of His denuding, "They parted my garments amongst them, and upon my vesture they cast lots." Of the bitter draught it says, "And they gave me gall for my food, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." Of His captivity, Esdras says, "You have bound me as if I were not the father who delivered you out of Egypt; you complain of me to the judge; and you have humiliated me when you hung me on the tree, and betrayed me." Of His burial Jeremias says, "Through His burial the dead will arise.'" And Godolias was silent and could not answer.

Then the fourth arose, Annas by name, and said: 'All that our prophets have said of others, Sylvester applies to his Christ; let him prove that this was truly said of his Christ.' Sylvester replied: 'Find me another who was born of a virgin, who was given gall to drink, who was crowned with thorns, was crucified, died, and was buried, arose from the dead, and ascended into Heaven.' Then spoke Constantine: 'If he can find no other, then he is confounded.' And Annas was silenced, because he could name no other.

Then the fifth, Doeth, arose and said, 'If your Christ comes from David and is holy, why did he wish to be baptized that he be sanctified again?' Sylvester replied and said: 'Just as circumcision came to an end by His circumcision, so our baptism had its holy beginning in His baptism; for He was not baptized to be sanctified, but that He might sanctify us.' And Doeth remained silent; and Constantine said, 'He would not remain silent if he knew how he could refute this.'

Then spoke Chusi, the sixth, 'We desire that Sylvester tell us why a virgin conceived Christ.' Sylvester replied, 'The mother of the first man was the earth. It was still pure and virginal, for it had not begun to drink men's blood, and had not yet been condemned to bear thorns; no man had been buried in it, nor had it been given to

the serpent for food. And so the second Adam had to be conceived of Mary the Virgin. For since the serpent conquered the son of the virgin earth, he had to be overcome by the son of a virgin. He vanquished Adam in Paradise, in the desert he tempted Christ; since he overcame Adam by gluttony, he had to be conquered by Christ through fasting.' And Chusi, too, had to stand aside.

Then the seventh spoke, Benjamin by name: 'How can Christ be the Son of God when He was tempted by the Devil to make bread out of stones in His hunger, and was led to the pinnacle of the Temple to adore the Devil?' And Sylvester replied: 'Since the Devil was victorious in that Adam heeded to him and did eat, Christ conquered the Enemy in that He fasted and paid no heed to his words. But know that He was not tempted in His divinity, but in His humanity. But He was thrice tempted as an example to us, that He might take temptation from us and show us how to conquer it. For oftentimes when man has overcome the fiend through continence, he is then tempted with worldly honours, and again with a lust for might and power. In this Christ conquered the Devil, and showed us by this example how we too can conquer him.'

Then Aroel arose, the eighth master, and said: 'We know that God is the most perfect Being and requires naught; what need had He that He be born in Christ? And why do you call Christ the Word? And it is also apparent that God could not be called father before He had a son; and after He begat Christ He was called Father, and therefore He must be changeable.' Sylvester replied: 'The Son was born of the Father before all time, that He might create all creatures out of nothing; and when the fulness of the time was come, He was born in the flesh, that He might bring back those who were lost. He could have brought them back by His word alone, but He wished to redeem them through suffering, which He could not do unless He became man; for His divinity could not suffer; and it is no imperfection, but rather a perfection of the divinity, that it cannot suffer. The Son of God we call the Word, for the prophet says: "My heart hath uttered a good word." God has always been the Father, for the Son too has been from all eternity; the Son is His Word, His wisdom, and His power — His Word, for it is written: "My heart uttered the word"; His Wisdom, for it is written, "I came out of the mouth of the most High, the firstborn of all creatures"; His Power, for it is written: "The depths were not as yet, and I was already

conceived, neither had the fountains of waters as yet sprung out; the mountains with their huge bulk had not as yet been established: before the hills I was brought forth." And since the Father from all eternity has not been without His Word, His Wisdom, and His Power, how could it be that He received the name of Father in time?'

Then Jubal, the ninth master, arose and said: 'Marriage is not condemned by God nor is it forbidden: why do you not permit your God to be born in wedlock? Would you blaspheme marriage? And again: how can the Almighty be tempted? How can He suffer who is all power? How can He die who is all life? Then too, you give us two sons, one born of God and one born of the woman. And how can it be that the humanity suffers, and the divinity, with which it is united, suffers not?' Sylvester replied: 'We do not honour the virgin birth of Christ because we wish to belittle marriage, but because we are taught to do so by reason. What is more, marriage is not dishonoured by it, but enhanced, for the Virgin who bore Christ was born in wedlock. Christ was tempted so that He might destroy all the temptations of the Devil; He suffered so that He might overcome all suffering; He died so that He might break death's sovereignty. God's only Son is in Christ, and just as the true Son of God is invisible, so is Christ visible; the godly in Him is invisible, the human is visible. But that the humanity in Him could suffer and yet His godliness remain untouched can be exemplified in this purple cloth of the emperor. It is wool; and when blood is added the purple colour results. But since it was made by hand, and spun from threads, what was it that was woven and spun? The colour of the imperial dignity, or that which was wool before it became purple? The wool is man, the purple colour God; and so God was present at the suffering of the Cross, but did not succumb to it.'

Then Thara, the tenth master, spoke: 'The comparison is not good, for the colour suffers with the wool.' With this the others agreed, but Sylvester answered: 'Then listen to another example. A tree stands in the sun's lustre and is flooded with the sun's light; no matter how much one damages the tree with blows, the sun is not hurt thereby. So it is with my God: no matter how much His humanity suffers, the sun of the Godhead remains clean and pure, insensitive to all pain.'

Then the eleventh master, Sileon, spoke: 'If all is true that the

prophets have foretold of your Christ, then I wish to know the reason of His suffering, humiliation, and death.' Answered Sylvester: 'He suffered hunger that He might feed us, He thirsted that He might pour the water of life upon our dryness, He was tempted that He might deliver us from the attacks of the Devil, He was captured that He might rescue us from the captivity of the Devil, He was humiliated that we might no longer be subject to the humiliation of the evil spirits, He was bound so that we might be freed of the bonds of the eternal curse, He was cast down so that we might be lifted up, He was stripped so that He might cover the nakedness of the first fall with the mantle of His love, He was crowned with thorns so that we might regain the roses of the lost Paradise, He was nailed to the tree of the Cross so that He might drive out the evil desires that began at the tree, He was quenched with vinegar and gall so that He might lead us into the land of milk and honey, and open up for us the fountains flowing with honey, He suffered death that we might be immortal, He was buried that He might bless the burial of the saints, He arose so that He might give life to the dead, He ascended into Heaven that He might unlock the gates of Heaven for us, He sits at the right hand of the Father so that He may hear the prayers of the faithful.' When Sylvester had spoken thus, the emperor and the judges and the Jews praised him greatly.

Then Zambri, the twelfth doctor, beside himself, cried out: 'I am taken aback that you, who are such wise judges, should put faith in these quibblings, and should imagine that the omnipotence of God can be measured by human reason. Let us have done with words, and come to deeds! They are fools who adore the Crucified, whereas the Name of God is so mighty that no creature can bear to hear it! And to prove to you that what I say is true, let a wild bull be led hither: and when he shall hear the sacred Name, he shall die on the instant!' And Sylvester said to him: 'How is it, then, that thou thyself hast heard this Name and hast not died?' And Zambri replied: 'It is not fitting that thou, an enemy of the Jews, shouldst know this mystery!' And they led in a wild bull, which a hundred brawny men were hard pressed to hold; and as soon as Zambri had pronounced a name in his ear, the beast was seen to bellow, turn back his eyes, and fall dead. Whereupon all the Jews began to applaud their champion noisily, and to insult Sylvester. But the latter said: 'The name which this doctor has pronounced is not the Name

of God, but that of the foulest of demons; for my God, Jesus Christ, not only does not kill the living, but gives life to the dead. To be able to kill and unable to restore life, befits lions, serpents, and other wild beasts. If then this man wishes to prove to me that he has not pronounced the name of a demon, let him bring back to life that which he has killed! For God has written: "I will kill and I will make to live!" ' And when the judges adjured Zambri to revive the bull, he said: 'Let Sylvester revive him, in the name of Jesus the Galilean, and we shall all believe in Him!' And all the Jews made the same promise. Then Sylvester, after a prayer, bent down to the ear of the dead bull, and said: 'O Name of malediction and death, go out of this beast by order of the Lord Jesus, in Whose Name I say: Bull, arise, and go back to thy herd in peace!' and at once the bull arose and went off gently and piously. And then the empress, the Jews, the judges, and all those who witnessed the miracle, were converted to the Christian faith.

Some days later, the priests of the idols came to Constantine and said: 'Holy Emperor, there is a dragon in a cave, and since thou didst receive the faith of Christ, this dragon daily slays more than three hundred men with his breath!' The emperor reported the matter to Sylvester, who answered: 'By the power of Christ, I shall render this dragon harmless!' And the priests promised that if he did this, they would be converted to Christ. Then Sylvester retired to pray. And the Holy Ghost appeared to him and said: 'Go down without fear into the dragon's pit, taking two of thy priests with thee; and when thou standest before him, say these words to him: "The Lord Jesus, born of a Virgin, crucified and buried, then risen from the dead and seated at the right hand of His Father, shall one day come to judge the living and the dead; and thou, Satan, await His coming in this place!" Thereupon thou shalt bind his maw with a cord, which thou shalt seal with a ring bearing the mark of the cross. And thereafter all three of you shall come home to Me, to eat of the bread which I have prepared for you!'

Sylvester, with two priests, went down into the pit, by one hundred and fifty steps, carrying two lanterns. He addressed the dragon with the words of the Holy Spirit, then bound his jaws, which hissed with rage, and sealed them as he had been told to do. And coming out of the pit, he found two magicians, who had followed him to see if he dared to confront the dragon. These two lay almost lifeless on

the ground, overcome by the pestilent breath of the monster. The saint revived them, and led them away completely restored; and straightway they were converted, and a great multitude with them. Thus were the Romans delivered from a twofold death, namely from their pagan belief and from the poison of the dragon.

At last, the blessed Sylvester, feeling the approach of death, gave three monitions to his clergy. He warned them to love each other, to govern their churches diligently, and to guard their flocks from the teeth of the wolves. And that done, he fell asleep happily in the Lord, in the year of grace 320.

## THE CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD

JANUARY I

There are four reasons which make the Day of the Circumcision of the Lord an important and solemn feast. Firstly, this day is the Octave of the Nativity. This feast, which is one of the greatest in the Church's year, has no proper Octave: for the octaves of the death of the saints signify that they, after their death, are reborn to a new life; whereas the Birth of Our Lord does not permit an octave, since it was followed by His Passion and death. Likewise neither the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, nor that of Saint John the Baptist, nor Easter, has an octave; this last feast, indeed, itself celebrates the Resurrection. These feast days have only what we may call complementary octaves, during which we fill out the celebration of the feasts themselves. The feast of the Circumcision is in this sense the Octave of the Nativity.

Secondly, the Circumcision recalls to us the conferring of a new name upon the Lord, for our salvation. We should remember that Our Lord had three names: He was called Son of God, Christ, and Jesus. The name *Son of God* belongs to Him as God; *Christ* belongs to Him as man; and *Jesus*, as God made man.

Thirdly, the Circumcision celebrates the first shedding of Christ's blood for men. As we know, Christ shed His blood five times for us: first, in the Circumcision, and this was the beginning of our Redemption; then while He was in prayer in the Garden of Olives, and this was a testimony of His desire of our Redemption; then in

the Scourging, and this merited our Redemption; then in the Crucifixion, and this was the price of our Redemption; and finally when His side was opened with a lance, and this was the Sacrament of our Redemption.

Fourthly, the Feast of the Circumcision honours Our Lord's circumcision itself. He had several reasons for allowing Himself to be circumcised. He wished to show that He had really taken human form: for blood can come forth only from a real body. He also wished to show us that we too should accept spiritual circumcision, that is, that we should apply ourselves to the work of our purification. Again, the Lord allowed Himself to be circumcised in order to take away from the Jews any excuse for their actions toward Him: for if He had not been circumcised, they could have said to Him, 'We did not receive thee, because thou wert different from our fathers.' Lastly, Our Lord wished to show that the Law of Moses was holy: for He had come not to destroy the Law, but to complete and to fulfil it.

As to the sacred flesh of the Lord's circumcision, it is said that an angel carried it to Charlemagne, who solemnly enshrined it at Aix-la-Chapelle, in the church of Our Lady. And it is said that at present it is in Rome, in the church which is called the Holy of Holies; wherefore a pilgrimage is made to that church on this day.

Finally, we may call to mind that in the past the pagans practised all sorts of superstitious rites on the first day of the year. The Christians were hard put to it to uproot these superstitions; Saint Augustine speaks of them in one of his sermons. These pagans had taken for their god a certain figure called Janus, whom they represented as having two faces, one turned toward the past year, the other toward the coming one; and it was he whom they honoured on this day. They also had the custom of disguising themselves in monstrous shapes. Some put on the skins of beasts; there were even some men who felt no shame in clothing themselves in women's garments. And Saint Augustine adds: 'As for anyone who preserves any pagan custom whatever, I much fear that the name of Christian will scarce avail to save him.'

## THE EPIPHANY

JANUARY 6

The Epiphany is given four names in accordance with the four signs which God manifested on this day. For today, God is adored by the Magi, baptized by Saint John, changes water into wine, and feeds five thousand men with five loaves.

When Jesus was thirteen days old, the Magi came to Him, led by the star. That is why the day is called *Epiphany*, from *epi*, above, and *phanos*, appearance, because the star appeared on high, or because Christ, through the star, was shown to the Magi as the true God.

After twenty-nine years, on this same day, He was baptized in the Jordan, being twenty-nine years and thirteen days old; for according to Saint Luke He was beginning about the age of thirty years. But Bede says that He had already completed His thirtieth year, as the Roman Church also holds. Thus this feast is also called *Theophania* from *theos*, God, and *phanos*, appearance, for God appeared in the Holy Trinity: the Father by His voice, the Son in the flesh, and the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove.

Thereafter, on the same day, but a year later when Christ was thirty years of age, or thirty-one years and thirteen days, He changed water into wine. For this reason the day is called *Bethphania* from *beth*, house, because the miracle was worked in a house, and because He was manifested as the true God thereby.

Again, after another year, when he was thirty-one or thirty-two years old, He fed five thousand people with five loaves, as Bede tells us, and as it is recorded in the hymn which is sung in many churches, and which begins with the words, *Illuminans altissimus*. Therefore the day is also called *Phagiphania*, from *phagos* which means baking or eating. However, it is not quite certain that this fourth miracle actually occurred on that day; for Bede in his *Original* does not explicitly say so, and Saint John, in the sixth chapter, says: 'the pasch was near at hand.'

And so God appeared on this day in four signs. The first was the star over the crib, the second the voice of the Father over the Jordan, the third the transformation of the water into wine at the wedding feast of Cana, the fourth the multiplication of the bread



in the wilderness. But the first of these miracles is the one celebrated by the Church, so that we shall here be concerned only with this one.

When Christ was born, three Magi came to Jerusalem. In Greek their names are Appellius, Amerius, and Damascus; in Hebrew, Galgalat, Malgalat and Sarachin; in Latin, Gaspar, Balthasar, and Melchior. There are three opinions as to the kind of Magi they were, according to the three-fold interpretation of the word. For *magus* means the deceiver, the magician, or the wise man. They are called deceivers, according to some, because of that which occurred through them; for Herod was deceived by them when they failed to return to him. For it is said of him: 'Then Herod perceiving that he was deluded by the wise men.' Again, *magus* means magician, and the magicians of Pharaoh were called Magi. Chrysostom says that they were called Magi because of their sorcery, and says that they were sorcerers who had been converted; and that the Lord made His birth manifest to them so that they might be led to Him, and might give hope to all sinners. Thirdly, *magus* means a wise man. For it is a Persian word, and in Hebrew means a scribe, in Greek a philosopher, and in Latin, *sapiens*, that is, wise man. Therefore they were called Magi, the wise men, and it is the same as saying 'those who are great in wisdom.'

It might be asked why the Magi came to Jerusalem, since that was not the place where Christ was born. Remy gives four reasons for this. In the first place, the Magi did not know the exact place of Christ's birth, although they knew the time, and came to Jerusalem because they thought that so wonderful a child could only be born in the capital of the kingdom. Secondly, they came to Jerusalem to take counsel with the wise men and the scribes about the birth of the Saviour. Thirdly, they came to Jerusalem so that the Jews would not be able to say that they were unaware of the time of the Messiah's birth. Lastly, they came in order that the spectacle of their zeal might put to shame the indifference and sluggishness of the Jews.

Saint John Chrysostom gives another explanation of the coming of the Magi to Jerusalem. According to him, they were astrologers who, from generation to generation, spent three days of every month upon a high mountain, waiting for the appearance of a star which Balaam had foretold to them. Now in the night of Christ's birth a

star appeared to them, which had the shape of a wondrous child, with a fiery cross upon his head; and it said to them, 'Go in haste into the land of Judea, and there you will find a new-born child, who is the King for whom you wait.'

It might also be asked how thirteen days were enough to make so long a journey, from the bournes of the Orient to Jerusalem, which is said to be at the centre of the world. According to Remy, the Child Himself led them. Or again, according to others, the swiftness of their journey was due to the fact that they were mounted on dromedaries, which are very fleet animals, capable of travelling as far in one day as horses do in three. For *dromedarius* comes from *dromos*, running and *ares*, power, the power of running.

Arriving in Jerusalem, they did not ask *if* the King of the Jews had been born: this they knew already from the star. They asked *where* He was born. Hearing this, Herod was much troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Herod was troubled for three reasons. He feared that the Jews would take this new-born king for their master; for Chrysostom says, 'Just as a twig at the top of the tree is swayed by the slightest breeze, so a word can move those who stand on the heights of power.' He also feared that he would be impeached by the Romans, if he permitted a man who had not been proclaimed king by Augustus to assume the title of king. And finally, as Saint Gregory says, an earthly king could not help being troubled in the presence of the King of Heaven. And as for the dismay which the Jews felt, it is likewise explained by three reasons, according to Chrysostom: first, because the impious cannot take pleasure in the coming of a just man; then, because they wished to flatter Herod, whose anxiety they saw; and again, because they were disturbed over their fate if a revolution came about.

Herod, assembling together all the chief priests and the scribes, inquired of them where Christ should be born. And when he learned that it was to be in Bethlehem, he made it known to the Magi, asking them to come and bring him word of what they saw. He pretended that he too would then go to adore the new-born Child; but in reality he thought only of putting an end to Him. We may point out another detail. The star ceased to guide the Wise Men as soon as they entered Jerusalem, no doubt so that they would have to make inquiry about the place of Christ's birth, thus making the miracle known to all. As for the nature of the star itself, some say that

it was the Holy Ghost, Who had taken this form in order to guide the Magi. Others think it was an angel who also appeared to the shepherds. Still others, with whom we agree, are of the opinion that it was a heavenly body newly created, and that once it had fulfilled its mission, it was absorbed once more into the matter of the universe. The angel appeared to the shepherds, who were Jews, in a form which was comprehensible to them; and the star to the Magi, likewise comprehensible to them. Fulgentius says that this star differed from all others in three things: it was not fixed in the firmament, but hung in the air near the earth; it was so bright that it was visible even in the daytime, eclipsing the light of the sun at noon; and it marched ahead of the Magi like a living person, instead of following the circular movement of the other stars.

Entering the manger, and finding the Child with His mother, the Magi fell to their knees and adored Him: and opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts, gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The choice of these gifts, and the giving of them, can be explained several ways. According to Remy, among the ancients it was the custom never to present oneself before a god or a king without offering gifts; and the Wise Men, who came from the country of Persia and Chaldea, where the river Saba flows (according to the *Scholastic History*), brought the gifts which the Persians and the Chaldeans were wont to offer. Saint Bernard says that the gold was intended to give testimony of the poverty of the Blessed Virgin, the incense to purify the smell of the stable, and the myrrh to give strength to the limbs of the Child, by driving out the worms from His entrails. Moreover, these three gifts signified the royalty, the divinity, and the humanity of Christ: because gold is used for royal tribute and He was the highest King, incense for divine worship, since He was God, and myrrh for the burial of the dead, since He was a mortal man. Finally, these three gifts are symbols of what we ourselves owe to Christ: for gold is the symbol of love, incense of prayer, and myrrh of the mortification of the flesh. Or they signified three things that were in Christ: His divine nature, his pious soul, and his pure body. These three things were foreshadowed in the Ark of the Covenant. The rod which blossomed is the flesh of Christ which arose from the dead; of this the Psalm says, 'And my flesh hath flourished again.' The tablet on which the laws were written

is the soul in which is hidden all the wisdom and knowledge of God. The manna is the divinity which has all savour and sweetness in it. The gold signifies the noble divinity, because it is more precious than all other metals; the incense signifies the pious soul, for it denotes piety and prayer, of which the Psalm says, 'Let my prayer be directed as incense in thy sight;' myrrh denotes the pure body, for it protects against uncleanness.

When they had adored Jesus, the Wise Men, who had been warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, went back another way into their country. Their bodies were discovered by Helena, the mother of Constantine, who bore them to Constantinople. At a later time, Saint Eustorgius carried them to Milan, of which place he was bishop, and laid them in the church which now belongs to our Order of Friars Preachers. But when the Emperor Henry took possession of Milan, he had the bodies of the Magi carried down the Rhine to Cologne, where the people venerate them with great devotion.

## SAINT PAUL THE HERMIT

JANUARY 10

Paul was the first hermit: to this fact Saint Jerome, who wrote his life, bears witness. To escape the persecution of Decius he took refuge in a boundless desert, and there, unknown to men, he dwelt for sixty years in the depths of a cave.

This Decius was also called Gallienus, and had begun to reign in the year 256. He tortured the Christians cruelly. One day he ordered two Christian youths to be seized. One of them had his whole body coated with honey, and was then exposed, beneath a blazing sun, to the stings of flies, hornets, and wasps. The other was laid upon a downy bed, in a charming place filled with soft breezes, the murmuring of water, the songs of birds, and the sweet odour of flowers; and he was bound down with ropes entwined with flowers, in such wise that he could not move hand or foot. The wicked emperor then sent to him a woman as vile of soul as she was fair of form, and ordered her to pollute the flesh of the young Christian, whose only love was for God. But as soon as he felt the dis-

turbance of the flesh, the youth, having no weapon with which to defend himself, bit off his tongue and spat it into the face of the lewd woman. Thus he drove out temptation by the pain of his wound, and won for himself an unfading crown of victory.

Terrified at the sight of these and other torments, Saint Paul fled into the desert. And when Saint Anthony in his turn repaired to the wilderness, thinking that he was the first hermit, he learned in a dream that another anchorite, better than himself, had a claim to his homage. Therefore Saint Anthony bent every effort to discover the whereabouts of this other hermit. And searching through the forests, he came first upon a hippocentaurus (centaur), half man and half horse, who told him to go to the right. Next he met an animal who was carrying some dates; the upper part of his body was that of a man, but he had the belly and the feet of a goat. Anthony asked him what he was; and he answered that he was a satyr, that is, one of those creatures which the pagans mistook for wood-gods. Finally Saint Anthony came face to face with a wolf, who led him to the cell where Saint Paul dwelt. But he, being aware of the approach of a man, had closed his door. Anthony besought him to open to him, declaring that he would die on the spot rather than go away. And Paul, yielding to his prayers, opened the door, and at once the two hermits embraced each other with great affection.

When the noon-hour drew near, a crow flew down, bearing a loaf formed of two halves. Anthony wondered at this, but Paul told him that God provided him daily with food in this manner: this day the quantity was doubled, on account of Anthony's visit. Thereupon they disputed piously over which of them was more worthy to divide the loaf. Paul wished that Anthony should do it, since he was the guest. Anthony insisted that it be Paul, who was the older. In the end both took hold of the loaf, and broke it in two.

As Anthony was on his way back to his cell, he saw two angels passing overhead, bearing the soul of Saint Paul. He hastened to retrace his steps, and found Paul's body kneeling in the attitude of prayer, so that Anthony thought he was still alive. But the saint was dead. And Anthony cried out: 'O blessed spirit, even in death thou showest still that which thou didst throughout thy life!' And while he was pondering over means of giving burial to Paul, thither came two lions, who dug a grave, helped to lay the body therein, and then returned to their forest. And Anthony took Paul's mantle,

which was fashioned of palm-leaves; and thereafter he wore it on high feast days. Paul's death befell about the year 287.

## SAINT HILARY

JANUARY 13

Hilary comes from *hilaris*, joyful; for he was indeed joyful in the service of God. Or it is the same as *alarius*, from *altus*, high and *ares*, power; for he was high in his deeds and powerful in his life. Or again, it comes from *hyle*, which means matter, and matter is obscure; for Hilary too was obscure and unfathomable in his speech.

Hilary, bishop of Poitiers, a native of Aquitania, shone among men like the morning star among the other stars. He was married, and the father of a daughter: yet, while still a layman, he began to lead the life of a monk, so that, by reason of his holiness and his knowledge, he was chosen bishop. Against the heretics he defended not only his own diocese, but the whole of Gaul. But the emperor, giving ear to the advice of two other bishops who like himself were infected with the Arian heresy, sent Hilary into exile, in company with the blessed Eusebius, Bishop of Vercelli. When this heresy had spread abroad, the emperor gave permission to all the bishops to come together and discuss the truth in matters of faith. Saint Hilary set out for this gathering; but the said bishops obtained for him the emperor's order to return direct to Poitiers. In the course of his return journey, he halted at the island of Gallinaria, in the Mediterranean Sea. The island was full of snakes, but they dared not draw near the saint: and he himself erected a post in the center of the island, and forbade the serpents to go beyond it, so that half the island was like the sea to them, and not like the land.

When he returned to Poitiers, he brought back to life an infant that had died without baptism. For a great while he lay prostrate in prayer; and at last the two arose together, the old man from his prayer and the child from death.

Hilary's daughter Apia wished to marry, but her father spoke to her in such wise that she decided to remain in the state of virginity. Then her father, fearing that one day she might weaken in this resolution, prayed the Lord to call her to Himself, rather than let

her live any longer. And so it came about; for a few days later the maiden died, and Hilary buried her with his own hands. Then the mother of the blessed Apia besought the bishop to obtain for her the same grace which he had obtained for her daughter. And Hilary did so, and by his prayer sent her to Heaven.

At that time Pope Leo, having fallen a prey to heresy, summoned all the bishops to a council; and Hilary, who had not been summoned, went to this council. Then the Pope, hearing of his arrival, forbade everyone to get up for him or give him a place. And when Hilary entered, the Pope said to him: 'Art thou Hilary the Gaul?' He replied, 'I am not a Gaul, but a bishop among the Gauls.' Then said the Pope: 'Thou art then Hilary of Gaul, but I am Leo, supreme Bishop and Judge, seated upon the throne of the Apostles.' To which Hilary answered: 'If thou art indeed Leo, yet art thou not the Lion of the tribe of Juda: and judge thou mayest be, but certain it is that thou judgest not upon the throne of God!' The Pope was indignant, and rose, saying: 'Wait but an instant, and upon my return I shall deal with thee according to thy deserts!' But Hilary said: 'And if thou returnest not, who shall answer me in thy stead?' Said the Pope: 'I shall come back immediately, and shall see to it that thy pride is humbled!' Whereupon the Pope betook himself to the place where a need of nature called him; and there he was seized with a dysentery, and died miserably. Meanwhile Hilary, seeing that no one arose to make room for him, seated himself quietly on the ground, saying: 'The earth belongs to the Lord!' And instantly the ground, at the spot where he was seated, rose up, in such manner that Hilary was on a level with the other bishops. And when word came of the wretched end of the Pope, Hilary arose, restored all the bishops to the Catholic faith, and sent them home to their dioceses. — Yet we must add that this miracle of the death of Pope Leo remains dubious. Neither the *Ecclesiastical History* nor the *Tripartite History* mentions it, and no chronicle indicates the existence of a pope of that name at the time. Moreover, Saint Jerome says that 'the Holy Roman Church has always been without stain, unsoiled by any heresy.' But it may be supposed that perhaps this Leo had usurped the title of pope, without being regularly elected: or perhaps again, Leo was the surname of Pope Liberius, who, as is known, leaned toward the heresy of the Emperor Constantine.

When at last, after many miracles, Saint Hilary, old and ailing, felt the approach of death, he called the priest Leontius, his confidant, and craved him to go outside the house, and then to return and make known to him what he had heard. And Leontius went out, and came back to say that he had heard naught but the noisy tumult of the city. And, toward midnight, a supernatural light, so bright that Leontius could not bear to open his eyes to it, filled the bishop's chamber. Little by little it faded out, bearing with it the soul of Saint Hilary.

He flourished about the year 340, in the reign of Constantine.

## SAINT FELIX IN PINCIS

JANUARY 14

The name of Felix is accompanied by the words *in pincis* referring to the site where he rests; or because he was martyred with sharp tools, for *pinca* means awl, or sharp tool.

We are told that Saint Felix was a schoolmaster, and used to treat his pupils with extreme severity. Therefore, when he was seized by the pagans, and openly proclaimed his Christian faith, he was handed over to the boys of his school, and they stabbed him to death with their styluses. However, the Church seems to hold that Saint Felix was not a martyr, but merely a confessor.

At one time when the pagans wished to force him to sacrifice to the idols, he destroyed every image to which he was led, by breathing upon it.

And another legend tells that one day when Maximus, the bishop of Nola, had fallen to earth half dead of hunger and cold (for he had fled to escape a persecution), Felix was bidden by an angel to come to his assistance. But as he had brought no food with him, he squeezed into the bishop's mouth the juice of a cluster of grapes which he found miraculously growing from a near-by thorn. Then, taking the old man upon his shoulders, he carried him to his house: and upon the death of Maximus, he was elected to succeed him.

One day when he was preaching, and his persecutors were closing in upon him, he hid in the ruins of a wall: and in a trice God commanded spiders to weave a web over the entrance to the ruin. Thus,



when the pursuers came upon the spider-web, they were sure that no one had entered there, and went their way.

Afterward, Saint Felix concealed himself in another place, and a woman brought food to him for six months, without once seeing his face. Finally, with the return of peace, he came back to his church, and it was there that he fell asleep in the Lord. He was buried at the gates of the city, in a place called Pinci.

He had a brother, also named Felix, who manifested great courage in the midst of persecution. The heathens wished to force him also to sacrifice to their idols. But he said: 'You are the enemies of your own gods, for if you lead me to them, I will breathe upon them as my brother did and they will all be destroyed.'

It is also related that Saint Felix kept a garden: and once, when thieves came in to steal his vegetables, they felt themselves compelled to till the garden all the night long, and Saint Felix found them so engaged in the morning. In response to his greetings and thanks, the thieves confessed their evil designs: and the saint kindly sent them off.

Another day certain pagans, who had come to lay hold on him, felt an unbearable pain in their hands. And as they cried aloud at the pain, the saint said to them: 'If you desire that your suffering end, say, "Christ is God!"' They said it, and were cured.

Then the priest of the idols came before him and said: 'Lord Bishop, my god has fled at the sight of thee, saying to me that he could not bear thy holiness. If then my god fears thee so much, how much more should I fear thee!' And Felix instructed him in the Christian faith, and baptized him.

Once Saint Felix saw the pagans praying to the god Apollo, and he said to them, 'If Apollo is a true god, let him tell me what I hold in my hand.' For he held in his hand a scroll on which the Lord's Prayer was written. But the god remained silent and the pagans were converted.

When Saint Felix felt that his end was approaching, he celebrated the Mass; and having exhorted the people to dwell in the peace of the Lord, he stretched himself on the floor of the church in prayer and breathed forth his spirit.

## SAINT MACARIUS

JANUARY 15

Macarius comes from *macha*, wisdom, and *ares*, power; or it may be derived from *macha*, punishment, and *rio*, master. For he was astute in withstanding the temptations of the Devil, and powerful in his life; he tamed his body with penance and was a master in the ruling of his monastery.

Macarius, who was an abbot, was making his way one day across the desert of Scete, and paused to rest in a tomb where the bodies of pagans were buried; and he placed one of these bodies beneath his head as a pillow. And the demons, seeking to frighten him, called out, saying: 'Get up, and come to bathe with us!' And another demon, entering into the corpse, and taking the voice of a woman, replied: 'I cannot get up, for a stranger has placed himself upon me!' But Macarius, undismayed, beat the body, and then said to it: 'Get up and be off, if thou wilt!' Hearing this, the demons fled, crying in a loud voice: 'Macarius, thou hast vanquished us!'

Another day Saint Macarius was passing through a swamp, on his way to his cell, when he met the Devil, who was armed with a scythe with which he tried to cut him down, but in vain. And the demon said to him: 'I suffer much trouble of thy making, Macarius, because I am unable to overcome thee. Yet all that thou dost, I do: thou fastest, and I eat not; thou watchest, and I sleep not; and there is only one thing in which thou surpassest me.' And the abbot said: 'What is that one thing?' And the Devil answered: 'It is thy humility, by reason of which I am powerless against thee!'

Finding the temptations which assailed him intolerable, Macarius took a large sack full of sand upon his shoulders, and carried it about in the desert, several days in succession. Theosebuius, meeting him, asked: 'Abbot, why bearest thou this fardel?' And he answered: 'To torment my body, which torments me!'

Another time he saw Satan, clothed in a tattered mantle from which hung a great number of flasks. And Macarius said to him: 'Whither goest thou?' And he said: 'I am bringing the brothers to drink.' Macarius asked: 'But why hast thou so many flasks?' And the Devil answered: 'So as to be sure to satisfy the brothers:

for if one of the flasks pleaseth them not, then I shall offer them of the second or the third, until they find one of my flasks to their taste!' Later on Macarius saw him returning, and said: 'Well then, what fortune hadst thou?' And he replied: 'All are become so holy that they refused me, with one exception: and his name is Theotistus.' Macarius arose forthwith and sought out this brother, and by his words freed him from temptation. On the morrow, Macarius again met the Devil, and said to him: 'Whither goest thou?' He answered: 'To the brothers!' And at his return, Macarius asked him: 'What success hast thou had with the brothers today?' He replied: 'Very bad!' Macarius said: 'How so?' Said the Devil: 'They are all holy, and to make matters worse, the only one that I had is lost to me, and has even become the holiest of all!' And the old man, when he heard these words, offered thanks to God.

Another day Macarius found a skull, and asked it whose head it had been. 'A pagan's!' it replied. 'And where is thy soul?' 'In Hell!' Macarius asked the skull if its place was very deep in Hell. 'As far down as the earth is lower than Heaven!' 'And are there any souls lodged even lower than thine?' 'Yes, the souls of the Jews!' 'And lower even than the Jews?' 'Yes, the souls of bad Christians, who were redeemed with the Blood of Christ, and held their privilege cheaply!'

Once Macarius was passing through a wide desert, and whenever he had completed a mile, he thrust a reed into the ground so that he might find the way back. After he had travelled for nine days, he lay down to rest. While he was asleep the Devil gathered all the reeds together and placed them at the saint's head. Macarius returned home with great difficulty.

There was a brother who oft tortured himself with the thought that he was quite useless in his cell, whereas in the world he might have been of great benefit to many. He complained to Saint Macarius, who taught him to reply to his doubts with the words, 'For the sake of Christ I will remain alone within the walls of my cell.'

One day the good abbot killed a fly with his hand, and having done so, was grieved that he had thus revenged his own hurt. To punish himself, he lived naked in the desert, until his whole body was an open wound from the stings of the flies and the gnats. And

afterward, he passed away in peace, leaving to the world the memory of his great virtue.

## SAINT MARCELLUS

JANUARY 16

Marcellus is the equivalent of *arcens malum a se*: one who drives evil away from himself. Or it may mean *maria percellens*, that is, one who calms the seas; or, one who conquers and stamps out the tribulations of the world, for the world is like the sea. So Chrysostom says, in his commentary on Saint Matthew's Gospel: 'In the sea there is confused murmuring, eternal fear, a picture of death, unceasing struggle of the waves, inconstancy without end.'

Marcellus was pope at Rome. He dared to upbraid the Emperor Maximian for his cruelty toward the Christians. He celebrated Mass in the house of a noblewoman who had consecrated herself to Christ. This enraged the emperor to such a point, that he turned the house into a stable, and forced Marcellus to care for the horses there, as a slave. After many years of this servitude, Saint Marcellus fell asleep in the Lord, about the year 287.

## SAINT FURSEY

JANUARY 16

Fursey the bishop, whose life Bede is believed to have written, breathed forth his spirit after a life which shone with every virtue and goodness. And he saw two angels coming toward him to bear away his soul; and a third angel, armed with a shining shield and a sword that flashed like lightning, went before him. Then he heard demons crying out: 'Let us go ahead of him and make war upon him!' They therefore ran ahead, then turned and cast fiery darts upon him; but the angel who was leading took these upon his shield, and straightway extinguished them. Then the demons set themselves against the angels, and said: 'Ofttimes he uttered idle words, therefore he should not go unpunished into the joys of the

blessed life!' The angel said to them: 'If ye bring not great vices against him, he shall not perish for slight ones!' Then the demon said to them: 'If God be just, this man shall not be saved, for it is written: "Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven!"' And the angel, making excuse for him, said: 'He had goodness in his heart, but the habits of men bound him!' 'As the custom of men has led him into evil,' said the demon, 'so let him be punished by the supreme Judge!' And the holy angel said: 'Let us submit it to God's judgement!' Whereupon they struggled, and the angel overthrew his adversaries.

Then the demon said: 'A servant who knows the will of his master and does it not, him shall the master belabour with many a blow!' The angel replied: 'In what then has this man not fulfilled the will of his Lord?' 'He accepted gifts of the wicked!' said the demon. 'But he thought that each of them had done penance!' returned the angel. 'He ought then to have made trial of their perseverance in penance,' said the demon, 'and so to have received the fruit!' 'Let God be the judge!' said the angel; and the demon again was vanquished.

Rising again to the combat, the demon then said: 'Hitherto I was sore afraid of God because He ever spoke sooth: but He has promised that any wrong that was not wiped out on earth would be punished for eternity, whereas this man once accepted a garment from a usurer, nor has he been punished therefor. Where then is the justice of God?' The angel said: 'Be still, for ye know not the hidden judgement of God; as long as there is hope of repentance, the divine mercy awaits a man!' 'But here there is no place for penance!' answered the demon. 'Ye know not the depths of the judgements of God!' said the angel. Thereupon the demon struck Fursey such a blow that afterwards, being restored to life, he always bore the mark thereof. For the demons snatched one of those whom they tortured in the fire, and hurled him at Fursey, and thus his shoulder and cheek were burnt: and he knew this man, for it was of him that he had received the garment. And the angel said: 'That which thou didst set afire has now burnt thee, for hadst thou not accepted the gift of this man who died in sin, neither would his punishment have burned in thee!' Thus did he receive this blow, God permitting, for having accepted the sinner's garment.

Now another demon said: 'There yet remains unto this man a

narrow gate, where we shall be able to overcome him: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself!"' The angel made answer: 'This man has ever done good works unto his neighbours!' But the enemy replied: 'This is not enough, unless he loved them as himself!' The angel answered: 'The fruit of love is to do good, because God renders to each according to his works!' And the demon said: 'Yet, since he has not fulfilled the command of love, he shall be damned!' And the struggle was renewed, and again the holy angels were victors over the horde of the accursed.

Again therefore the demon said: 'If God be not unjust, and the transgression of His word be displeasing to Him, this man will not go scot-free; for he promised to renounce the world, and on the contrary he has loved the world, whereas it is said, "Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world!"' The holy angel answered: 'Not for himself did he love the world's goods, but that he might give to needy men!' The devil responded: 'Howsoever he may have loved them, it is against the commandment of God!' Again the enemies were overthrown, and again they returned to the attack, turning to subtile accusations; and he said: 'It is written, "When I say to the wicked: O wicked man, thou shalt surely die: if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked man from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity: but I will require his blood at thy hand!"' This man, however, did not preach repentance to sinners as he ought!' The holy angel answered: 'When the hearers despise the word, the tongue of the teacher is estopped; whence it befits the prudent man to know how to hold his peace when it is not the time of speaking!' And at each contradiction of the demons the strife waxed in violence, until, by the Lord's judgement, the angels triumphed and the demons were vanquished, and the holy man was surrounded by a boundless light. And Bede asserts that one of the angels said to Fursey: 'Look back upon the world!' And looking back, he saw a darksome vale, and in the air four fires standing some distance apart from each other. And the angel said to him: 'These are the four fires which consume the world. One is the fire of falsehood; for men have promised in Baptism to renounce the Devil and all his pomps, and this they nowise do. The second is the fire of greed; for they put the world's riches before the love of heavenly things. The third is the fire of discord, for they recoil not from offending their neighbours even in exceeding vain

things. The fourth is the fire of impiety, for they think nothing of robbing the poor and working fraud upon them.' Thereupon these fires came together into one, and drew closer and closer to him, and being affrighted, he said to the angel: 'My lord, the fire comes nigh to me!' And the angel said: 'What thou hast not kindled will not burn in thee. This fire in sooth tests each man according to the merits of his works. For like as the body is burnt by forbidden lust, so shall it be burnt by the punishment prescribed!' At length he was brought back to his own body, in the midst of his mourning kinsmen, who deemed him to be dead. He, however, lived some time longer, and ended his days in a praiseworthy manner, doing good works.

## SAINT ANTHONY

JANUARY 17

Anthony comes from *ana*, above, and *tenens*, holding, and means he who holds higher things and despises the world. For he spurned this world which is unclean, restless, passing, filled with deception and very bitter. Of this Augustine says: 'O unclean world, why dost thou rage? Why dost thou wish to mislead us? Thou holdest us while thou fleest; what wouldst thou do wert thou to remain constant? Whom dost thou not deceive with thy sweetness, and yet within thou art bitter and thy sweetness is external.' The life of this saint was written by Athanasius.

Anthony was twenty years old when he heard these words of Jesus read in the church: 'If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor!' At once Anthony sold all his goods, gave the profit to the poor, and went off to the desert to become a hermit. There he was forced to undergo innumerable temptations by the demons.

One day, when by faith he had conquered the demon of impurity, the Devil appeared to him in the form of a black child, and acknowledged his defeat. For Saint Anthony had prayed to God that the demon of impurity, who persecutes youth, be shown to him. And when he saw him in the form of a black child, he said, 'I have seen thee in a shameful form, nevermore shall I fear thee.'

Another time, when he was living in a tomb in Egypt, a swarm of demons maltreated him so dreadfully that one of his companions believed him dead, and bore him off on his shoulders. But when the brothers came together and began to mourn him, Anthony raised himself, and asked the man who had borne him thither to bring him back to the spot where he had found him. And as he lay there, overcome by the pain of his wounds, the demons returned in the forms of divers savage beasts, and began anew to tear at him with their teeth, their horns, and their claws. Then, all at once, a wondrous light filled the cave, and put the demons to flight; and Anthony was made whole at the same instant. Then, understanding that Jesus Himself had come to his aid, the saint said to Him: 'Where wert thou a while ago, good Jesus? Why didst Thou not come to me then, to succour me and heal my wounds?' And the Lord answered: 'Anthony, I was here, but I waited to see thee fight; and now that thou hast fought the good fight, I shall spread thy glory throughout the whole world!' So great was the saint's fervour, that when the Emperor Maximian was putting the Christians to death, he used to follow the martyrs to their place of torture, in the hope of being slain with them: and he was sore afflicted to see that martyrdom was denied him.

Coming into another part of the desert, he found there a large silver dish, and said to himself: 'Whence comes this silver dish, in a place where there is no trace of men? If a traveller had lost it, he would have come back to seek it; and he would surely have found it, as large as it is. Satan, this is another of thy tricks! But thou wilt not succeed in weakening my will!' And the moment he said this, the dish vanished in smoke.

Then he came upon a huge lump of gold; but he shunned it as if it were fire, and took refuge on a mountain where he remained for twenty years, working wondrous miracles.

One day, being rapt in spirit, he saw the world all covered with nets, tightly knotted together. And he cried: 'Oh! Who shall be able to escape these nets?' And a voice answered him: 'Humility!'

Another time, as the angels were carrying him from place to place in the air, the demons sought to hinder his passage by recalling to him the sins he had committed since his birth. But the angels



said: 'In vain do ye speak of these sins, which the grace of Christ has already wiped out. But if ye know of any that Anthony has committed since he became a monk, say them!' The devils were silent; and Anthony was freely carried into the air and brought back to earth.

Saint Anthony tells us that one day he saw a certain demon who was very tall, and who had the effrontery to pretend to be divine Providence. The demon said to him: 'What dost thou desire, Anthony, that I may give it to thee?' But the saint, armed with his faith, spat in the Devil's face, and threw himself violently upon him: whereupon the demon vanished.

Another time the evil Spirit appeared to him in a body so tall that his head seemed to touch the sky. Anthony asked him who he was. He admitted that he was Satan, and went on: 'Why do the monks fight me, and why do the Christians curse me?' Anthony answered: 'They have reason to do so, since thou ceasest not to torment them!' The Devil said: 'It is not I who torment them, but they who torment themselves; for I am powerless, since the Kingdom of Christ has spread out over the whole earth!'

An archer once saw Anthony conversing pleasantly with his brothers, and this angered him. Then Anthony called to him and said, 'Take your arrow and arch your bow.' The archer did so; and Anthony bade him do so a second and a third time. The archer said, 'If I stretch my bow so much, it will break.' 'It is the same with the service of the Lord,' said Anthony, 'if we stretch ourselves beyond our measure, we too would soon be broken. Therefore it is seemly that we lay aside our severity from time to time.'

Someone asked Saint Anthony: 'What must I do to please God?' The saint replied: 'Wherever thou goest, have God ever before thine eyes: whatever thou dost, obey the commandments of the Holy Writ: And wherever thou chancest to be, stay there! Do these three things, and thou shalt be saved!'

An abbot also asked Anthony what he should do, and Anthony responded: 'Trust not to thy own righteousness, restrain thy belly and thy tongue, and when a thing is past, do not sigh after it!' And he said again: 'Just as fish die when they are thrown up on dry land, so monks who tarry outside their cells and mingle in the affairs of the world, weaken in their good resolutions.' And he

said further: 'He who lives in solitude is free of three sorts of war; against hearing, and seeing, and speaking: and he has only to struggle against his heart.'

Several of the brothers, in company with an old man, went to visit Saint Anthony. When Saint Anthony saw them he said: 'You have a good companion in this old man.' And he said to the man, 'Father, you have brought good brothers with you.' And the aged man answered, 'They are good, but their house has no door; and whoever pleases can go in the stable and untie the donkey.' This he said because whatever was in their hearts, soon came out upon their lips.

Saint Anthony used to say that the disturbances of the flesh might be of three kinds: those that came from nature itself, those that arose from excess of food and drink, and those that were caused by the suggestions of the Devil.

A brother of his hermitage had renounced the world, but not entirely, for he kept some of his goods about him. Anthony said to him: 'Go and buy some meat!' On his way back with the meat, dogs set upon him and sank their teeth into him. Then Anthony said to him: 'In like wise do the demons tear apart those who renounce the world, and wish to cling to their goods!'

One day when he grew weary of being in his cell, he said: 'Lord, I wish to be saved, but my thoughts will not allow me!' Then he left his cell, and saw a man whom he did not know. The man was seated and hard at work: then he arose and prayed. But the unknown man was in reality an angel, and he said to Anthony: 'Do likewise, and thou shalt be saved!'

Once the brothers asked him about the fate of souls. On the following night he heard a voice saying, 'Arise, go out and look.' He did so, and saw a horrible monster whose head touched the clouds; his arms were outstretched and he hindered many who were trying to fly to Heaven; but some soared on high and he was unable to detain them. Anthony was filled with great joy and, at the same time, with great sadness; for he understood that these were souls who were trying to mount toward Heaven and Satan was attempting to halt them: and the guilty he cast down, but he could not arrest the flight of the holy ones, and this caused him much torment.

And one day, as Anthony was at work with his brethren, they

heard him praying to God to ward off the evils which threatened the world. They asked him therefore what these evils were. And he, weeping and sobbing, replied: 'I have seen in the heavens the altar of God surrounded by horses, who trod the holies underfoot: and I have heard the voice of the Lord saying: "My altar shall be defiled!"' And in fact, two years later the Arian heretics broke the unity of the Church, defiled the sacred things, and threw down the Christian altars.

A man of authority in Egypt, named Ballachius, had allied himself with the Arian sect, and persecuted the Church of God; he had the monks and the nuns turned out naked, and beaten with rods. Then Saint Anthony wrote to him: 'I see the wrath of God about to fall upon thee! If thou desirest to escape it, cease to persecute the Christians!' The wretch read the letter, laughed at it, threw it on the ground, beat the monks who had brought it, and ordered them to tell their master, Anthony, that he too would soon feel the severity of his chastisements. Five days later, Ballachius went to mount one of his horses, a beast of gentle demeanour. But the horse overthrew him, bit him, and trampled upon him: and he died three days thereafter.

One day the brethren asked of Anthony the secret of salvation. The saint replied: 'Have ye not heard that Jesus said: "If one strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him also the other?"' They answered: 'Yes, but that is beyond our strength!' Anthony said: 'Then at least suffer in patience when you are struck on one cheek!' And they: 'That is still beyond our strength!' And Saint Anthony: 'Then be content not to strike back when you have been struck!' And they: 'Even that is above our strength!' Whereupon Saint Anthony turned to one of his followers and said to him: 'Go and make ready a fortifying beverage for these brethren, for in truth they are exceedingly feeble. And as for you, prayer is the only thing I can recommend to you!' All this may be read in the *Lives of the Fathers*.

At last, Saint Anthony, come to the age of one hundred and five years, fell asleep in peace, after having embraced his brethren. He died under the reign of Constantine, who mounted the throne in 340.

## SAINT FABIAN

JANUARY 20

Fabian in its Latin form is Fabianus, which is similar to Fabricanus. This, in turn, comes from *fabricans*, and means one who forges eternal salvation. And he in sooth has a threefold right to this name: the right of childhood, the right of purchase, and the right of the good fight.

Fabian was a citizen of Rome: and one day when the populace was about to elect a new pope, he mingled with the people to learn the outcome of the election. Suddenly a white dove came down from Heaven and lighted upon Fabian's head: whereupon the multitude chose him to be pope. Then, as we learn from Pope Damasus, he sent seven deacons and seven subdeacons into the divers regions of the world, with the duty of gathering and writing down the Acts of the martyrs.

He likewise built many basilicas on the sites where these holy martyrs were buried. And it was he who decreed that each year, on Holy Thursday, the chrism of the preceding year should be burnt, and replaced with a fresh chrism, consecrated on the same day.

And Haymon relates that on one occasion, when the Emperor Philip wished to assist at the Easter watch and partake of the sacraments, Pope Fabian withstood him to the face, and forbade him entrance to the church until he had confessed his sins and done penance.

In the end, Saint Fabian, in the thirteenth year of his pontificate, won the crown of martyrdom, being beheaded on the order of Decius.

## SAINT SEBASTIAN

JANUARY 20

Sebastian comes from *sequens*, following; *beatitudo*, beatitude; *astin*, city; and *ana*, above; and it means one who pursues the beatitude of the city on high; for he earned it, as Augustine writes, at a fivefold price. Through his poverty he gained the kingdom, through his suffering, eternal joy, through striving and labour, eternal

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 qui exposa la sainte loy. Ierosme fu expose vision de beaulte  
 ou deusint parolles. **¶** Il est moult de beaultez La pre  
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 est diuine. La quinte est celestielle et est ou pays des sains  
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 ete de vie. La intellectuelle en excellence de purete. La  
 substancielle en charite ardent. La celestielle en la par  
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 nunciant. et les aultres en confirmant les vraies et con  
 dempnant les faulces et en exposant les doubteuses.  
 Et apres sensient la vie de moult saint Ierosme.





rest, through humiliation, glory, and through his death, life. Or Sebastian comes from *bastum*, saddle, for Christ is the knight, the Church the steed, Sebastian the saddle: so Christ fought through him in the Church and led many martyrs to victory. Or Sebastian means one who is surrounded; for he was surrounded by arrows, like a porcupine with quills. Or it means one who goes about, because he went among the captive Christians and fortified them for their trials.

Sebastian was a good Christian. He was a native of Narbonne and a citizen of Milan. But the pagan emperors Maximian and Diocletian felt so great an affection for him that they had named him leader of the First Cohort, and attached him to their personal following. As for him, he wore the knightly coat of mail only in order to be able to assist and console the persecuted Christians, lest they succumb to their suffering.

One day, two twin brothers, Marcellinus and Mark, were to be beheaded because they had refused to renounce the faith of Christ, and their parents came to try to persuade them to yield. Their mother visited them first, with her hair dishevelled, her raiment in tatters, her breast bare, and said to them: 'O my beloved sons, what unheard of misery, what frightful grief, have fallen upon me! Unhappy woman that I am, I am losing my sons by their own wish! If the enemy had taken them from me, I would have run into the thick of the battle to snatch them back! If the judges had seized them and thrown them into prison, I would have broken in even if I were to give my life to deliver them! But this is a new kind of death, in which the victim begs the headsman to strike, in which the living yearn to live no longer, and invite death in lieu of evading it! This is a strange sort of agony, in which the youth of the sons is thrown away by their own choice, and the old age of the parents is condemned to survive!' Next came the father, borne up on the arms of his slaves, his head covered with ashes; and the old man cried out: 'I am come to say farewell to my sons, who of their own will have chosen to leave us! The grave which I had prepared for me will now be their grave. O my sons, staff of my old age and blood of my heart, why do you love death so much? Let all young men come and weep over these youths who crave death! Let all old men join me in mourning for my sons! Come all ye fathers, and see that your own sons do not suffer in like

manner! And you, my eyes, be blinded with tears, lest I see my sons fall beneath the sword!’ Then the wives of the two holy young men appeared, bearing their children in their arms, and groaning, and saying: ‘To whose care do you entrust us? Who will be the guardians of these children? Who will divide your goods? Are your hearts made of iron, that you disdain your parents, repulse your wives, and deny your children?’ And already the courage of the youths was beginning to weaken, when Saint Sebastian, who was present at the scene, came forward and said: ‘Brave soldiers of Christ, let not these sweet words and pleas rob you of the eternal crown!’ Then, turning to the parents, he said to them: ‘Be without fear! They will not be separated from you, but will go to prepare lasting dwellings for you in Heaven! For know that from the beginning of the world, life has betrayed those who have built upon it, it fopped those who sought it, and derided those who trusted in it. And there is so little security in it that one may well say one is completely deceived by it. It encourages the thief to steal, the passionate to strike blows, the liar to deceive. This life commands sin, recommends evil and counsels injury. But the persecution which we suffer on earth, flames up today and blows away like smoke tomorrow; today it is hot and tomorrow cool, in an hour it is done. But eternal suffering is ever renewed that it may be more fearful, it is increased that it may burn deeper, and it is fanned that the punishment may be fulfilled. Therefore our sole desire should be to suffer martyrdom gladly. What though the Devil thinks to conquer us here, when he tries to catch us, he himself is caught; when he snatches at us, he is bound; when he would conquer, he is vanquished; when he tortures, he suffers; when he ridicules, he himself is the object of derision; when he grasps our throats, he dies.’

And while Sebastian was speaking thus, a great light, coming from Heaven, surrounded him, and they saw him suddenly wrapped about in a mantle of gleaming white, with seven angels standing before him. And Zoe, the wife of Nicostratus, in whose house the youths were under guard, came and threw herself at Sebastian’s feet, and implored his aid with gestures, for she had lost the power of speech. Then the saint said: ‘If I am the servant of God, and the things I have said are true, O Thou Who didst open the mouth of the prophet Zacharias, open the mouth of this woman!’ And the



woman, her tongue loosened, cried out: 'Blessed be thy words, and blessed those who believe them! For I have seen an angel standing before thee, holding out to thee a book, wherein were written the words which thou didst utter!' And the woman's husband, coming in his turn to cast himself at the feet of the saint, begged for mercy, and struck off the chains of the martyrs, bidding them take their freedom. But they declared that not for anything in the world would they put aside the victory which they had gained. And such was the divine power and grace of Sebastian's words, that not only did they strengthen Marcellinus and Mark in their constant desire of martyrdom, but also converted their father Tranquillinus, and their mother, and other persons, all of whom were baptized by the priest Polycarp.

And the aged Tranquillinus, who was suffering from a grievous malady, was cured as soon as he was baptized. Learning this, the prefect of the city of Rome, who was himself very ill, asked Tranquillinus to bring to him the man who had cured him. And when the old man had brought Sebastian and Polycarp the priest to him, he besought them to restore him to health. But Sebastian told him that he would not be healed unless he allowed them to destroy the idols of the gods in his presence. But Chromatius answered, 'Not you, but my servants should do this!' Sebastian replied, 'Thy servants fear to destroy their gods, and if the devils were to harm them, the pagans would say that it was because they had destroyed their gods.' Therefore Chromatius finally consented, and the two saints destroyed more than two hundred idols. Then they said to Chromatius: 'Since what we have just now done has not restored thee to health, it must be that thou keepest still another idol intact, or else thou hast not fully sworn thy unbelief!' Then he confessed that he had in his house a secret room where the whole firmament was represented, enabling him to foresee the future: and he added that his father had spent more than two hundred pounds of gold in setting up this room. And Saint Sebastian said: 'As long as this chamber is not destroyed, thou wilt not recover thy health!' And Chromatius gave his consent to the destruction of the chamber. But his son Tiburtius, a proud youth, declared: 'I will not permit the tearing down of so splendid a work to go unpunished! But on the other hand I will not have it said that I do not wish with all my heart to see my father restored to health. Therefore I propose that

two furnaces be heated, and that if after the chamber is demolished my father is not healed, these two Christians be burned alive!' Sebastian replied: 'Let it be done as thou hast said!' And while the magic chamber was being razed, an angel appeared to the prefect and announced to him that the Lord Jesus had restored his health. When the prefect saw that he had been healed, he ran after the angel in order to kiss his feet. But the angel would not suffer him to do so for he had not yet been baptized. Then the prefect and his son Tiburtius and four thousand persons of his household received baptism.

And Zoë, who had been the first to be converted, was seized by the infidels, and died after long tortures. When the aged Tranquillinus heard of this he cried: 'Behold, the women go before us to the crown of martyrdom! why do we delay?' And he himself was stoned a few days later.

Then Tiburtius received the order to burn incense to the gods, or else to walk barefoot on burning coals. Then, having made the sign of the cross, he walked over the burning coals, saying: 'Methinks I am walking on a bed of roses, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ!' And the prefect Fabian said to him: 'I know that your Christ has taught you to practise the arts of magic!' To which Tiburtius answered: 'Silence, wretch! Thou art unworthy to utter this holy sweet Name!' Enraged, the prefect had him beheaded.

As for Marcellinus and Mark, they were attached to a gibbet, and there they chanted joyously: 'Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!' Then the prefect said to them: 'Madmen, renounce your folly, and save yourselves!' But they replied: 'Never have we been so happy together! And we beseech thee to leave us as we are until our souls are freed from the prison of our bodies!' Whereupon the prefect had them run through with lances: and in this manner their martyrdom was accomplished.

Thereafter, this prefect denounced Sebastian to the Emperor Diocletian, who summoned him, and said: 'Ingrate, I have given thee the first rank in my palace, and thou hast striven against me and my gods!' Sebastian answered: 'For thee and for the State of Rome I have always prayed God Who is in Heaven!' Then Diocletian ordered him to be tied to a stake in the middle of the Campus Martius, and commanded his soldiers to transfix him with arrows. And the soldiers shot so many arrows at him that he was covered

with barbs like a hedgehog; and then, thinking that he was dead, they left him there. But not many days after, Saint Sebastian stood on the steps of the palace, and accosted the two emperors, berating them severely for their injustice to the Christians. And the emperors said: 'Is this not Sebastian, whom we put to death with arrows?' And Sebastian retorted: 'The Lord has recalled me to life, so that once more I might come to you, and reproach you for the ill you do to the servants of Christ!' Then the emperors had him beaten with rods until he gave up the ghost. And they ordered his body to be thrown into the sewer, lest the Christians preserve and venerate it as the relic of a martyr. But the following night Saint Sebastian appeared to Saint Lucina, revealed to her where his body was, and bade her bury it at the feet of the Apostles: and this was done. He suffered martyrdom about the year of the Lord 287.

In the first book of his *Dialogues*, Saint Gregory tells the following story. A certain woman of Tuscany, recently married, had been invited to the dedication of a church to Saint Sebastian. But, the night before the ceremony, she was so aroused by desire that she could not abstain from the embraces of her husband. The next morning, nevertheless, this woman went to the church, being more in fear of the judgements of men than of the judgement of God. But scarcely had she entered the chapel where lay the relics of Saint Sebastian, when a demon seized upon her, and began to torture her in the sight of all. Then the priest of the church covered her with the altar veil, and at once the evil spirit lay hold of the priest. The woman was led to the house of magicians; but in the course of their incantations, a whole legion of demons, that is, a troop of six thousand, six hundred and sixty-six of them, entered into the woman to torment her still more sorely. But then came a holy man named Fortunatus, who by his prayers cured the woman.

We read in the *Annals of the Longobards* that in the time of King Humbert the whole of Italy was infected with a plague so violent that hardly anyone could be found to bury the dead: and this plague raged above all in Pavia. There were many who saw with their own eyes an angel in the heavens, followed by a demon with a rod. Whenever the angel commanded, the demon struck, and so made death. And as often as he touched a house, the dead were carried out of it. Then God made known to a pious man, that the bane would not cease until an altar was erected to Saint Sebastian in the

city of Pavia. The altar was raised forthwith in the church of Saint Peter in Chains: whereupon the plague vanished completely. And the relics of Saint Sebastian were brought to Pavia from Rome, where his martyrdom had occurred.

Saint Ambrose writes of Saint Sebastian in his *Preface*: 'The blood of the holy martyr Sebastian, which was shed in Thy name, makes manifest Thy greatness, O Lord, Who through his intercession workest Thy might in the weak, crownest our efforts, and givest health to the sick.'

## SAINT AGNES

JANUARY 21

Agnes is the same as *agna*, which means lamb; for she was gentle and humble like a little lamb. Or it may come from *agnon*, which is Greek and means pious; for she was pious and compassionate. Or it comes from *agnoscere*, meaning to know; for she knew the way of truth. But Augustine opposes truth to three vices, namely vanity, lying, and doubt: and she overcame these three by means of the great virtues which were hers.

Agnes, a maiden of great wisdom, was thirteen years of age when she lost death and found life. She was young in years, but mature of mind and soul: she was fair of visage, but fairer of heart.

The son of a prefect, seeing her on the way home from school, fell in love with her. He promised her diamonds and great riches if she would consent to be his wife. But Agnes answered him: 'Begone, sting of sin, food of crime, poison of the soul, for I am already given to another lover!' She began to vaunt her lover and betrothed, praising in him the five qualities which an espoused maiden esteems most highly in him whom she loves: namely, nobility, beauty, wealth, courage blended with strength, and lastly love. And she said: 'He whom I love is nobler than thou. The sun and the moon wonder at His beauty, His riches are inexhaustible, He is mighty enough to bring the dead to life, and His love surpasses all love. He has placed His ring upon my finger, has given me a necklace of precious stones, and has clothed me in a gown woven with gold. He has graven a sign upon my face, to

keep me from loving any other than Himself, and He has sprinkled my cheeks with His blood. Already I have been embraced by His pure arms, already His body is with my body. And He has shown me an incomparable treasure, and has promised to give it to me if I persevere in His love.'

Hearing this, the young man sickened with his love, and was in danger of death. His father came to call upon the maiden in his son's behalf: but Agnes made answer that she could not break faith with her Bridegroom. Then the prefect asked who this lover might be, and when someone told him that it was Christ whom she called her lover, he began at first to question her gently, and then threatened to punish her if she refused to answer. But Agnes said to him: 'Do whatever pleases thee, I shall not give up my secret!' Then said the prefect: 'Make thy choice! If thou prizest thy virginity, offer sacrifice to Vesta with the virgins of the Goddess; otherwise I shall lock thee up with prostitutes!' But she replied: 'I will not sacrifice to thy gods, and yet I shall not be defiled, for I have with me a guardian of my body, an angel of the Lord!' Then the prefect had her stripped of her garments, and led naked to a house of debauch. But God made her hair to grow in such abundance that it covered her better than any garments. And when she entered the house of shame, she found an angel awaiting her, holding a tunic of dazzling whiteness. Thus the place became for her a house of prayer, and the angel cast about her a supernatural light.

Then the prefect's son came to the place with other youths, and invited his companions first to have their pleasure of the maiden. But when they entered the room where Agnes was, they were so terrified that they fled back to the prefect's son; and he, calling them cowards, rushed madly into the room. But the Devil throttled him on the spot, because he had not honoured God. Then the prefect, in tears, came to Agnes, and questioned her about the death of his son. And Agnes said: 'He whose designs he sought to carry out has received power over him, and killed him.' And the prefect said to her: 'If thou dost not wish me to think that thou thyself hast killed him by some magic art, ask and obtain that he come back to life!' And at Agnes' prayer the young man returned to life, and began to confess Christ publicly.

But then the priests of the gods stirred up the populace, and cried out: 'Death to the witch, who changes men's souls and bewitches

their minds!' Meanwhile the prefect, at the sight of the miracle, would gladly have released the maiden: but, fearing that he would be proscribed, he withdrew sadly, and left her under guard with a lieutenant. This man, whose name was Aspasius, had the young girl thrown into a raging fire, but the flames, dividing, consumed the pagans, and left Agnes untouched. Then, by the order of Aspasius, a dagger was thrust into her throat, and in this manner her heavenly Spouse claimed her for His bride, having decked her with the crown of martyrdom. All this is believed to have taken place under the reign of Constantine the Great, who reigned about the year 309. And the parents of Saint Agnes, with the other Christians, buried her with great joy; and they barely escaped the shower of stones which the pagans hurled at them.

Agnes had a foster-sister whose name was Emerentiana, a virgin full of sanctity, who was preparing to receive baptism. This young maiden stood before Agnes' tomb, and began to inveigh against the pagans who had slain her, until these killed her also, by stoning her. At once the earth trembled, and God's thunder fell upon the spot, taking the lives of many of these people, so that thereafter the faithful were allowed to draw near to the tomb without being molested. And the body of Emerentiana was buried beside that of Agnes.

Eight days later, as Agnes' kin watched around the tomb, they saw a choir of virgins in robes of gold; and among them was the blessed Agnes, with a lamb whiter than snow at her right side. And she said to them: 'Look upon me, in order that ye may not mourn me for dead, but may rejoice and be glad with me; for I have been admitted henceforth to sit in the midst of this company of light!' By reason of this vision the Church, eight days after the feast of Saint Agnes, celebrates the Octave of the feast.

The news of this vision came to Constantia, the daughter of Constantine, who was suffering from leprosy. Without delay the young princess betook herself to the saint's tomb, and there she prayed to her and fell asleep. Then in a dream she saw Agnes saying to her: 'Constantia, be constant! Believe in Christ, and thou shalt be cured!' Awakened by the voice, she arose, and saw that she was cured! She received Baptism, caused a basilica to be erected above the tomb of the saint, and there gathered around her a number of virgins who, like herself, passed their lives in chastity.

A certain priest of the church of Saint Agnes, called Paulinus,

began one day to be tormented by a dreadful temptation of the flesh: and, as he had no wish to offend God, he besought the sovereign pontiff to allow him to take a wife. But the pope, who knew his goodness and his simplicity, sent him a ring set with an emerald, and told him to address the same request to a beautiful statue of Saint Agnes which stood in his church. And when the priest asked Saint Agnes to allow him to marry, the statue all at once held out its ring finger, slipped on the ring given by the pope, and then withdrew the hand. And straightway the priest was freed of all his temptations. This is said to be the origin of the ring which is still to be seen on the finger of the statue. — But others say that the ring was given by the pope to a priest whom he commissioned, at the same time, to watch over the basilica of Saint Agnes as he would over a bride. For lack of care, indeed, the venerable temple was falling into ruins. And the saint's statue is said to have placed the ring on its finger as a sign that she accepted these espousals.

Saint Ambrose writes of her in his *Book of the Virgins*, 'Old men, youths, children, sing her praise! Who is more praiseworthy than the one whom all praise? All men are her heralds, since merely by speaking of her, they proclaim her glory as a martyr. Be astonished that she was God's witness although at her age she could hardly have been her own master. God trusted her when men trusted her not; for that which was above nature came from Him Who created all nature. This was a new martyrdom! She who was too weak to suffer, was strong enough to conquer, she who could not fight, yet won the crown! The mastery of her virtue accomplished what the prejudice of her years forbade. No bride hurried to her bridal chamber as did the saint to her place of judgement; joyously, with hurried pace.' The same Ambrose says in his *Preface*, 'Saint Agnes disdained the glory of her noble birth and in return secured heavenly nobility; she despised that which men sought and in return, shared in the eternal kingdom; she died a precious death in Christ's name and so became like Him.'

## SAINT VINCENT

JANUARY 22

Vincent comes from *vitium incendens*, which means he who burns vice; or *vincens incendia*, he who vanquishes fire; or *victoriam tenens*, he who holds victory. For he burned and routed vice through the castigation of his body; in his suffering he overcame the flames of martyrdom by his constancy; he won a victory over the world by despising it. There were in the world three things which he had to conquer: error and falsehood, which he overcame by wisdom; unclean love, which he overcame by his purity; and earthly fear, which he overcame by his steadfast courage. Of this Augustine writes: 'The holy martyr teaches us how the world with all of its confusion, unclean love and terror must be conquered.'

The martyrdom of Saint Vincent was recorded, it is said, by Saint Augustine. Prudentius celebrated it in one of his great poems.

Vincent, who was noble by birth, but nobler still by his faith and his piety, was deacon to the saintly bishop Valerius. Since Vincent was more eloquent than he, the aged bishop entrusted the deacon with the charge of preaching in his stead, in order that he himself might the better devote his time to prayer and contemplation. But on the order of the governor, Dacian, both of them were brought to Valencia and thrown into prison. There the governor left them for a long time without food. Then, when he thought that they must be near death from hunger, he had them brought before him. When he saw that they were in the best of health and spirits, he was exceedingly angry, and cried out: 'How now, dost thou dare, Valerius, to defy the commands of thy rulers?' Saint Valerius began to make reply with his usual mildness. But Vincent said to him: 'Revered father, this is no time to murmur in a timid voice, as if we were afraid. We must speak out loudly and freely! If thou wilt permit me, therefore, I shall answer the judge for thee!' And Valerius replied: 'Beloved son, long have I allowed thee to speak in my place. I charge thee now to respond in the name of the faith which we uphold!' Then Vincent, turning to Dacian, said: 'Be it known to thee, who accusest us, that for us who are Christians it is a dreadful blasphemy to deny our faith!'

Dacian, becoming more and more indignant, sent the aged bishop



into exile. Then, both to punish the young deacon for his boldness and to use him as an example to terrify the other Christians, he ordered that Vincent be stretched on the rack, and his limbs broken. And when they had broken the saint's bones, the governor said to him: 'Now then, Vincent, what sayest thou of the state of thy wretched body?' But the saint, smiling, answered: 'This is what I have at all times desired!' Dacian, beside himself, threatened him with still other tortures, if he continued in his refusal to yield. But Vincent replied: 'Fool, the more thou tryest to be angry with me, the more in reality dost thou give me joy! Give rein then to all thy malice! Thou shalt see that with God's help, I have more power in being tortured than thou in torturing me!'

By that time the governor was shouting with rage, and beating the torturers to punish them for their laxity. And Vincent said: 'Poor Dacian, thou thyself wakest vengeance for me upon my tormentors!' The governor was so angry that he began to foam at the mouth. 'Why must your arms be so weak?' he demanded of the executioners. 'You have overcome adulterers and parricides, and forced confessions from their lips! Why must this Vincent be the only one to have the better of you?' Then the torturers drove iron rakes into the saint's sides, so that the blood streamed from every part of his body, and his entrails hung out between the broken ribs. And Dacian said to him: 'Vincent, have pity on thyself! Thou canst still recover the beauty of thy youth, and escape yet other torments which await thee!' But Vincent replied: 'O thou poisoned tongue of the Devil, I have no fear of thy tortures: I am affrighted only that thou feignest to pity me! For the more furious I see thee, the greater is my joy! Stay not the torturers, I adjure thee, that I may have the more occasion to show thee my triumph!' Then Dacian had him taken from the rack, caused a grill to be made ready and a great fire to be lighted under it. And the saint encouraged the executioners to hurry their labours. Then of his own accord he mounted upon the grill, and offered all his members to the flames. Meanwhile the red-hot spikes of the grill sank into his flesh; and salt was thrown upon the fire, so that it might penetrate his wounds and make them burn more cruelly. Thereafter, even his entrails were pierced, and poured out around him. But he, motionless and with his eyes raised to Heaven, called upon the Lord.

The executioners then brought word of this to Dacian. 'Alas!'

said he, 'he has conquered us! But stretch out his agony! Throw him into the darkest of dungeons, and cover the floor with nails and blades: leave him there with his feet bound together, and when he is dead, make it known to me!' The heartless servants made haste to do the will of their still more heartless master. But it came about that the King for Whom the glorious soldier was suffering changed his pain into a more glorious victory. For the darkness of the dungeon was dispelled by a boundless light. The sharpness of the nails was changed into a bed of sweet-smelling flowers. The bonds fell from his feet: and angels came to comfort the martyr, who rose and walked about on the flowers, and sang with the angels. And the music of the chant and the sweet odour of the flowers spread through the prison.

Terrified, the guards watched all this through the chinks in the door; and the spectacle converted them to the faith of Christ. But Dacian, being informed of this new defeat, said: 'In sooth this man has bested us, and it is useless to try to overcome him! Carry him to a bed and lay him upon soft pillows! Revive him, and when he begins to recover we shall test him with new pains!' The saint was therefore laid upon a bed: and there, after resting for some time, he breathed his last. This happened about the year of the Lord 287, under the reign of the Emperors Diocletian and Maximian.

Dacian, learning of his death, was seized with terror and shame. And he said: 'Powerless was I to conquer him alive: at least I shall punish him now that he is dead, and gloat over his chastisement. Thus shall I have the last word, after all!' He then ordered the saint's body to be exposed in a field, to be devoured by the beasts and birds of prey. But angels came at once and stood guard over the body, protecting it against the approach of the animals. A huge crow, voracious by nature, flapped his wings at the birds of prey, although they were larger than himself, and drove them away; he also drove away a wolf with his biting and cawing; then he stood motionless before the corpse, looking with wonderment at the angels who guarded it. And Dacian, hearing of this, said: 'I fear me that even in death he will not be vanquished by me!' Yet he made a final effort. He had a great stone tied to the corpse, and it was then thrown into the sea to be consumed by the fishes, since the animals of the fields had spared it. But the sailors tried in vain to make the body sink beneath the waves. It floated away from them and re-

turned to the shore, even before them, where it was taken up by a devout woman, who, with the help of the Christian brethren, gave it solemn burial.

Of this martyr Saint Augustine says: 'The Blessed Vincent conquered in words and conquered in woes; he conquered in profession and in tribulation; he conquered on the wheel and he conquered in the waves. He was tortured that he might be strengthened; he was beaten that he might be instructed; he was broken that he might become whole; burned that he might be cleansed.' And Saint Ambrose says in a preface: 'Vincent is broken, quartered, cut in pieces, scourged, roasted: yet his spirit cannot be broken, because he fears God more than the world, and would rather die to the world than to God.' Prudentius, who shone during the reign of Theodore the Elder, about the year of the Lord 387, tells us that Vincent further said to Dacian: 'Tortures, prisons, iron hooks, flames, death — all these are but a child's play to a Christian!' To which Dacian replied: 'Let him be bound, and let his arms be pulled out in opposite directions, until the joints of his bones crack, and his liver issues from his body!' But the soldier of God laughed at his torments, and scolded the iron for not piercing him more deeply. And later, in the dungeon, one of the angels said to him: 'Arise, holy martyr, and come to take thy place among the heavenly company! Fearless warrior, bravest of the brave, thou thyself art feared by the tortures as their conqueror!' And Prudentius, after he relates these things, cries: 'Sublime hero, thou hast won a double palm, thou hast merited a double crown of laurel!'

## SAINT JOHN THE ALMONER

JANUARY 23

One night while he was in prayer, John, the patriarch of Alexandria, saw a wondrously fair maiden standing before him, wearing a crown of olive upon her head. John, taken aback by the sight, said to her: 'Who art thou?' And she answered: 'I am Pity! It is I who brought the Son of God upon earth! Take me for thy spouse, and thou shalt gain thereby!' Thenceforward John displayed so much pity that he was called *Eleymon*, the Merciful, or the Al-

moner. He used to call the poor his masters; and following his example, the Hospitallers call the poor 'Sirs.' One day he called his serving men together, and said to them: 'Go through the city, and make a list of all my masters for me!' They did not understand what he meant, and so he went on: 'Those whom ye call needy and beggars, I call our masters and helpers. For it is they, and no others, who can give us the Kingdom of Heaven!'

In order to encourage the faithful to almsgiving, he often told them the following story. One day certain beggars were warming themselves in the sun, and passed the time comparing the virtues of the rich men of the town, praising the good and blaming the bad. And there passed by a certain tax-gatherer named Peter, a rich and powerful man, who was without pity for the poor, and brutally drove away those who begged at his door. The beggars were of accord that not one of them had ever had an alms from his hand. Then one among them said to his comrades: 'Will you wager with me that this very day I shall have an alms of him?' The wager was made, and the beggar accosted Peter and asked him for an alms. Now the tax-gatherer was accompanied by a slave who carried a basket of wheaten loaves: and in his anger, Peter, finding no stone at hand, took a loaf from the basket and threw it at the beggar. The beggar caught the loaf, and ran to show his companions the alms which he had received. Two days later Peter fell ill, and lay at the door of death; and then he had a vision. He saw himself standing before the judgement seat of God; and on one side of the scale the demons, black as coal, heaped his sins, while the angels, grouped on the other side in their white array, found naught with which to weight down the other dish of the scale. And one of the angels said: 'Sooth to say, we have naught to place in the dish, except a wheaten loaf which he gave to Christ two days ago, and that despite himself!' And the angels put this loaf into the scales, and Peter saw that it balanced all his sins. And the angels said to him: 'Do thou add something to this loaf, if thou wouldst escape these wicked demons!' Then Peter, awakening, found that he was cured, and said: 'In truth, if a single loaf, thrown in anger at a poor man, has been of such profit to me, how much more should I gain by giving all my goods to the poor!'

The next day he was walking through the street, attired in his best mantle, when a man who had been shipwrecked asked him for

something with which to clothe himself. He took off his precious mantle and gave it to the man; but he ran off and sold it to a peddler. Then Peter, seeing his mantle in the peddler's stall, was sore afflicted, and said to himself: 'I am not even worthy that a beggar should keep a thing in memory of me!' But the following night, in a dream, he saw an unknown man who shone more brightly than the sun, and who wore a cross upon his head; and he saw that this man was wearing the mantle which he himself had given to the poor man. The stranger said to him: 'Wherefore art thou so aggrieved?' Peter then set forth to him the reason for his grief. And Jesus (for it was He) said: 'Dost thou recognize this mantle?' And he answered: 'Yes, Lord!' And Our Lord said: 'I wear it because thou hast given it to Me! I was cold and thou didst cover Me. I thank thee for thy goodness!'

Then Peter, waking from his sleep, began to bless the poor, and said: 'By God's life, I shall not die before I have become one of them!' He then gave away to the poor all that he possessed. Then, summoning his notary, he said to him: 'I have a secret to tell thee; if thou betrayest me, or refusest to do what I command thee, I shall sell thee into bondage.' He then gave him ten pounds in gold and said: 'Go to Jerusalem, and sell me as a slave to some Christian; after which thou shalt distribute the price of the sale to the poor!' The notary refused; but Peter said to him: 'Do as I say! But if thou refusest, I myself shall sell thee to the barbarians!' The notary then clothed his master in rags, and brought him to Jerusalem, where he sold him to a silversmith for thirty pieces of silver. And Peter, now a slave, took upon himself the most menial tasks, until even his fellow-slaves made sport of him, beat him, and despised him as a fool. But Our Lord appeared to him frequently, and comforted him by showing him the clothing and the other gifts which He had had of him.

Meanwhile, in Constantinople, Peter's native city, the emperor and the citizens mourned his disappearance. But one day certain men of Constantinople came to Jerusalem to visit the Holy Places, and were invited to dine at the home of Peter's master; and they whispered to each other: 'How strangely this slave resembles noble Peter, the tax-gatherer!' And one of them, having studied him well, said: 'Indeed it is Peter himself! I am going to him, and I shall take him back to Constantinople, by force if need be.' But the

slave, seeing that he was discovered, at once took flight. The porter of the house was deaf and dumb: but Peter, coming to the door, spoke to him, that he might open and let him pass. On the instant, the deaf-mute regained his speech and hearing. Joyfully he opened the door for Peter, and then went to his fellow-servants and said: 'The slave who did the cooking has just made off; but doubtless he was the servant of God, and not of our master. For when he ordered me to open the door, a flame leapt from his mouth and touched my lips and my ears: and at once I heard and spoke.' All then went forth and began to search for the fugitive, but in vain. Whereupon they all did penance, for that they had treated with contumely a true man of God.

A monk named Vitalis decided to test Saint John, to see if he, who was otherwise perfect, would lend a ready ear to gossip, or be misled by scandalous rumours. He went therefore to Alexandria, and procured a list of all the courtesans. Then, visiting them one after the other, he said to each one: 'Give me this night, and in return for the money I give thee, consent to abstain until the morning from all fornication!' And he spent every night with the courtesans, kneeling in a corner of the room, and praying for them: and in the morning he left them, forbidding them to make known what he had done. Nevertheless one of the women made the matter public; and in punishment, Vitalis prayed that a demon might enter into her. And everyone said to her: 'Well dost thou deserve what has befallen thee, liar! For this wicked monk went to thee to do wrong, and for no other purpose!' And every evening the monk Vitalis said to those about him: 'Now I must be off, because such and such a woman awaits me!' And to those who reproached him, he replied: 'Have I not a body, like all other men? Is God angry with the monks alone? And are not monks men like the rest?' Then they said to him: 'Take off thy monkish frock, then, and take a wife, and give scandal no longer!' But Vitalis, pretending to be angry, answered: 'Leave me alone, and cease to meddle with my affairs! Has God appointed you my judges? Look to yourselves! No one will ask you to account for me!' And this he said as loudly as he could, so that the rumour might reach the ears of Saint John; and it was not long before the saint was aware of the scandal. But with God's help he was able to steel his heart, lest he give heed to all that was said of Vitalis.

In the meantime the monk, while continuing his ruse, prayed to God that after his death the true meaning of his actions might be made known to Saint John and the others. Through his efforts, a great number of courtesans were converted, and vowed themselves to a life of religion. But one morning, as he issued from the house of one of them, he met someone on his way to commit sin with her. This man dealt the monk a blow in the face, and said: 'Wretch, wilt thou never give up thy uncleanness?' To which Vitalis replied: 'Truly, friend, it is I who should give thee this blow!' And in fact, some hours later a devil came to him in the form of a black man, and struck him violently on the cheek, saying: 'Take this blow from the abbot Vitalis!' And the devil seized him and tormented him so sorely that the multitude came running at the sound of his cries. But Vitalis, seeing his remorse, prayed for him and obtained his deliverance. Then, feeling the approach of death, the good monk left a screed which said: 'Beware of judging anyone rashly!' And when he had died, all the courtesans disclosed the purity of his conduct; and everyone in Alexandria glorified God on this account, but none more than Saint John, who said: 'How would I have wished to receive, in his stead, the blow which Vitalis suffered!'

A poor man came to John in the guise of a pilgrim and asked him for an alms. John said to his steward: 'Give him six pieces of silver!' The man went off and changed his raiment, then came back and again asked an alms of the patriarch. And John said to the steward: 'Give him six pieces of gold!' The steward gave them to him; but when the beggar had gone, he said to John: 'Father, this man is come twice today in different garments, and twice has received alms!' But Saint John pretended that he had not recognized him. And the beggar, changing his attire a third time, returned again to seek alms. Then the steward gestured to Saint John that it was the same man. But John answered: 'Go and give him twelve pieces of gold; for it might well be my Lord Jesus Christ, Who seeks to try me out, to see which of us will be the first to weary, He of asking or I of giving!'

One day a noble lord wished to make certain purchases, using a sum of money which belonged to the church, and which Saint John intended to distribute to the poor. The two men had a long discussion, and separated in anger. But when the eleventh hour drew near, the patriarch sent his arch-priest to the other, to say: 'My lord,

the sun will soon set!' And the other, breaking into tears at these words, hurried to beg pardon of Saint John.

A nephew of Saint John had been insulted by a shopkeeper, and came to complain of it to his uncle. The patriarch replied: 'How can it be that anyone has dared to contradict thee or speak against thee? My son, trust me, for this very day I shall do something that will surprise the whole of Alexandria!' Whereupon the young man was gratified, thinking that his uncle would have the impertinent fellow whipped. But Saint John, seeing him consoled, said: 'My son, if thou art truly nephew to My Humility, prepare to receive the whip in the sight of all! For true kinship comes not from flesh and blood, but proceeds from like virtues in the soul.' Then he sent for the shopkeeper, and absolved him of all levies and taxes. And all understood what he had meant in saying that the whole city would be astonished at his action.

Learning that as soon as an emperor was crowned he set about constructing a tomb of marble and precious metal, Saint John likewise ordered a tomb to be built. But then he commanded that the work be left unfinished, and that each day, while he was leading his clergy in the offices, someone should come and say to him: 'Make haste to complete thy tomb, for thou knowest not the hour that the thief will come to claim thee!'

A rich man was pained to see that Saint John slept beneath the coarsest of coverings, and he made him a gift of a sumptuous coverlet. But the saint, with this coverlet upon his bed, was unable to sleep all night, so troubled was he by the thought that three hundred of his 'masters' might have had wherewith to cover themselves for the price of this one bedcloth. And weeping, he said to himself: 'How many men lay down this night without supping, how many are exposed to the rain, in the open places, their teeth chattering with the chill of the night! And thou hast eaten of excellent fish, and now thou liest in thy bed with all thy sins, beneath a cover that cost thirty-six livres! No, the wretched John shall no longer be covered in this fashion!' And at the crack of day the saint sold the coverlet, and gave the price to the poor. The rich man, learning this, bought back the coverlet and gave it to the saint, praying him to keep it for himself. The saint accepted it, but sold it again, and distributed the price to the poor. The rich man bought it back a second time and



again brought it to the saint, and said: 'We shall see who will be the first to desist, thou from selling this covering, or I from buying it back!' And the saint took delight in making capital of the rich man, saying that it was no sin, but a right act, to strip the rich in order to give to the poor.

In order to move the faithful to compassion, Saint John often told them the story of Saint Serapion. He had given his mantle to a poor man, when he met another man who was suffering from the cold. He therefore gave this man his tunic, and was left stark naked, holding the Gospel in his hand. A passerby asked him: 'Abbot, who has stripped thee?' The abbot showed him the Gospel, and replied: 'This is what has stripped me!' But then, coming upon a third poor man, he went and sold the Gospel so as to give him an alms. And when he was asked what he had done with his Gospel, he responded: 'The Gospel said: "Sell what thou hast and give to the poor." But it was all I had: and so, to obey it, I have sold it!'

A beggar who had received fivepence at Saint John's order, was angry that he had not had more, and began to revile the patriarch in public. His servants wished to chastise the beggar, but Saint John forbade them, saying: 'Suffer him, brethren, to curse me if he chooses! During the sixty years of my life, I have insulted Christ by my sins. What right have I to forfend a moment's insults from this man?' And he had them bring a bag of money, and ordered the beggar to take as much as he would.

The people had fallen into the habit of leaving the church after the Gospel, and going to spend their time in idle gossip in the square outside. One day, after the Gospel, the patriarch came out with them, and sat down in their midst. As all were astonished, he said to them: 'My children, the shepherd's place is with his flock. Therefore, either you will go back to the church, and I shall go back with you to finish the Mass, or you will stay here, and so shall I!' Twice he did this, and thus taught the people not to leave the church during the offices.

A young man had carried off a nun, and the clergy came to accuse him before Saint John, demanding that he be excommunicated; for, they said, he had brought two souls to ruin, his own and that of his mistress. But Saint John refused to take any action against him,

and said to his clergy: 'No, my sons; for it is you who, at this moment, commit two sins! You sin first in going against the commandment of the Lord, Who said: "Judge not, neither shall you be judged." And you also sin by presumption, for you know not whether these two unfortunates continue to do wrong, or whether, on the contrary, they have not already begun to repent!'

Oftentimes, while he was in prayer, Saint John was rapt in ecstasy. At these times he was heard speaking with Our Lord, and saying: 'So, Sweet Jesus, we shall see who will overcome the other; Thou in giving, or I in distributing Thy gifts!' And when, being taken with a fever, he was aware that his death was near, he cried: 'I thank Thee, O my God, that Thy mercy has granted the desire of my weakness, which was that at my death I should possess naught but a single penny. And now this penny, too, can be given to the poor!' Whereupon he expired, and his venerable body was laid in a tomb which already held the remains of two bishops. And at once these bodies miraculously drew aside to make room between them for the blessed John.

A few days before his death, a sinful woman came to him and told him that she had committed sins which she dared not confess to anyone. The saint counselled her to write her sins on a leaf of paper, to seal the paper, and to bring it to him; and he added that he would pray for her. This the woman did. But when she learned of the saint's death some days later, she was terrified at the thought that her confession might fall into the hands of strangers. She betook herself therefore to the tomb of the saint, and prayed to him to make known to her the whereabouts of the paper she had written. And out came Saint John from the tomb, attired in his pontifical robes, and leaning on the shoulders of the two bishops who were buried beside him. He said to the woman: 'Why dost thou molest me in my repose, and these two holy men who are my companions? See, our stoles are drenched with your tears!' And he tendered her the paper, with her seal upon it, saying: 'Break the seal, and read thy confession!' But when she had broke the seal, she saw that the list of her sins had been erased, and in its place was the following inscription: 'I forgive thy sins in answer to the prayers of my servant John.' The woman offered thanks to God: and Saint John, with his two companions, returned to the tomb.

This great saint flourished about the year of the Lord 605, in the reign of the Emperor Phocas.

## **SAINT TIMOTHY**

JANUARY 24

Saint Timothy came from Antioch; but the feast of his birth is celebrated at Rome, because it was in this city, under Pope Melchiades, that he was ordained priest by Sylvester, who later became bishop of Rome. Not only did Sylvester ordain him a priest, but he did not hesitate to sound the praises of his life and teaching. For a year and three months Timothy preached the truth of Christ, and made many conversions; after which, God deeming him worthy of martyrdom, he was taken by the pagans, delivered to the prefect Tarquin, subjected to a long imprisonment and to a thousand tortures, and finally, as a stalwart athlete of God, beheaded with a number of condemned assassins. The following night Saint Sylvester carried the body to his house, and thither summoned Pope Melchiades, who came with his priests and deacons, spent the night in prayer around the corpse, and thus canonized the martyr. On the morrow a pious woman named Theonia asked the pope for the privilege of burying Timothy in her garden, close by the place where lay the body of Saint Paul, and offered to erect a tomb at her own expense. And the Christians accorded her wish the more willingly that they were happy to lay Timothy to rest beside Saint Paul, since he had at one time been the disciple of the great apostle.

## **THE CONVERSION OF SAINT PAUL**

JANUARY 25

The conversion of the apostle Saint Paul took place in the same year as the Passion of Christ and the Lapidation of Saint Stephen; but this is true only if we consider the year as the space of twelve months, and not as the time between January 1 and December 31. For the crucifixion of Christ occurred on March 25, the stoning of Saint

Stephen on August 3, and the conversion of Saint Paul on January 25.

Three reasons explain why the Church celebrates this conversion, and not that of the other saints. In the first place, the conversion of Saint Paul is a greater example than the others, to prove to us that there is no sinner who may not hope for the grace which he needs. Further, this conversion is the subject of a greater joy, for the Church rejoiced the more over the conversion of Saint Paul, that she had been the more afflicted by his persecutions. Finally, this conversion was more of a miracle than the others, since God showed by it that He could convert His cruellest persecutor, and make of him His most loyal apostle.

For this conversion was thrice miraculous; namely in Him Who brought it about, in the manner in which it was accomplished, and in him to whom it occurred. The one who brought it about was Christ. He showed His miraculous power when He said to Paul: 'It is hard for thee to kick against the goad': and also that He transformed him so quickly that he replied: 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' Of this Saint Augustine says: 'The Lamb that was killed by the wolf, makes a lamb of the wolf; the one who raged in persecution, now prepares to obey.' He also showed His great wisdom in that He overcame Paul's pride by His own humility, and not by His divine majesty; for He said: 'I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest.' 'He did not call himself God, or the Son of God,' says the *Gloss*, 'but He said: take on the depths of My humility and shake off the scales of thy pride.' Thirdly, God here showed His gentleness; for in the midst of his intention and action, Paul was converted. His intention was evil, for he breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the Christians; his action was evil, for he went to the high priest that he might bring the Christians bound to Jerusalem. Nevertheless, God's mercy converted him.

The conversion was also miraculous in the manner in which it was accomplished, namely, the light which prepared him for conversion. This light was sudden, immeasurable, and divine, for it is said: 'Suddenly a light from Heaven shined round about him.' Paul was possessed of three great vices. The first was his wanton boldness, for it is said: 'He went to the high priest.' 'He was not called,' says the *Gloss*, 'but went of his own free will, driven by his own desire.' The second was his insolence, for it is written: 'Breathing

out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord.' The third was his earthly understanding of the law; therefore the *Gloss* says of the words, 'I am Jesus,' 'I, thy God, speak to thee from heaven, who thoughtest Me dead, with thy Jewish understanding.' The heavenly light was sudden that it might affright the bold one; immeasurable that it might cast down the proud and insolent one into the depths of humility; divine that it might transform his earthly knowledge into divine knowledge. One can also say that the conversion was accomplished through three things: the voice which called him, the light which illuminated him, the power of God which converted him.

The conversion was also miraculous in him to which it occurred, namely, Saint Paul himself. For there were three external signs: he fell to the ground, he became blind, and he was forced to fast for three days. He was thrown to the ground that he might be lifted up. Saint Augustine says: 'Paul was thrown to the ground that he might be blinded; he was blinded that he might be changed; he was changed that he might be sent forth; he was sent forth that he might suffer death for the truth.' Again, Augustine says: 'The enraged one was shattered and became a believer; the wolf was slain and became a lamb; the persecutor was thrown down and became a messenger; the son of ruin was broken and lifted up as the chosen vessel.' He became blind that he might receive the true light; for his knowledge was beclouded. That is why some believe that in the three days during which he was blind, God taught him the Gospel. For he himself says that he did not receive it from a man or through a man, but solely through the revelation of Jesus Christ. Saint Augustine writes: 'I call Paul a true warrior of Christ, for he was taught by Christ, anointed by Him, crucified with Him, and lifted up in Him. He scourged his body that the flesh might be obedient in all good deeds. And verily it was obedient in all good deeds; for he could suffer hunger and yet have enough, and knew how to make his way in all things and in all places, and willingly bore all opposition.' Chrysostom says: 'He regarded tyrants and the angry mob as no more than flies; he looked upon death and pain with a thousand sufferings as playthings. He bore torture willingly, and he was more adorned with the chains of captivity than with a precious crown; he accepted wounds with more joy than others did gifts.' There were also in Paul three things as opposed to those in Adam:

he raised himself in pride against God and therefore God cast Paul to earth; as Adam opened his eyes so Paul was blinded; Adam ate the forbidden apple, Paul abstained from that which was permitted.

## SAINT JULIAN

JANUARY 27

Julian comes from *jubilus*, jubilation, and *ana*, above; and means the same as *jubilannus*, for he strove to gain Heaven with rejoicing. Or it comes from *Julius*, one who begins, and *anus*, an old man. For in God's service he was aged in patience, but in his estimation of himself he was a beginner.

Saint Julian was Bishop of Le Mans. It is said that he was the same man as Simon the Leper, who was cured by Christ, and then invited Him to dine at his table. After Our Lord's Ascension, Simon, or Julian, was ordained bishop of Le Mans by the twelve apostles. He shone with many virtues, raised three persons from the dead, and fell asleep in the peace of the Lord. It may be this Saint Julian whom travellers invoke, that they may find hospitality on their journey; this would be due to the honour which was his in receiving Our Lord as his guest. But more probably the Saint Julian who is surnamed 'the Hospitaller' is another Julian, who slew his parents, not knowing who they were, and whose story we shall relate presently.

There was another Saint Julian, a native of Auvergne, noble by birth and still nobler by faith, who so longed for martyrdom that he went out in search of his persecutors. Finally the consul Crispinus sent one of his officers to put him to death; and Julian ran to meet him, and offered himself to his blows. His severed head was borne to his friend Ferreolus, with a threat that he would suffer a like death unless he offered sacrifice to the idols. Saint Ferreolus refused and was put to death; and his body and the head of Saint Julian were laid in the same tomb. Long years after, Saint Mamertius, the Bishop of Vienne, found Saint Julian's head in the hands of Saint Ferreolus: and the head was as fresh and unmarked as if it had been buried that very day.

Among other miracles told of this saint, there is one of the deacon who wished to steal some sheep which belonged to the church of

Saint Julian. When the shepherds tried to hinder him, in the name of Saint Julian, he replied: 'Saint Julian does not eat sheep.' Shortly thereafter, he was seized with a fever and he cried out aloud that Saint Julian was burning him. He ordered that cold water be poured over him so that he might be cooled; but soon an evil stench arose from his body so that no one would remain with him, and in a short while he was dead.

Gregory tells the story of a peasant who set out to work his fields on a Sunday, and suddenly found his fingers stiffened in such a way that he could not let go of the hatchet which he used to clean his plough-share. The peasant was not made well until two years later, in the church of Saint Julian, and at the prayer of the saint.

There was a third Saint Julian, the brother of Saint Julius. These two brothers went to the Emperor Theodosius, who was filled with zeal for the Christian faith, and asked his permission to build churches, wherever they went, in place of the temples of the idols. The emperor gladly gave them leave, and conferred upon them a scree which prescribed that all must give them obedience and aid, under pain of death. And it came about that one day Saint Julian and Saint Julius were engaged in building a church in a place called Gaudianum, near Tours, and they called upon all who passed by for aid. But a company of men who were travelling in a coach, and had to pass the spot, said to each other: 'What excuse could we find for going by freely, without stopping to work on the building of the church?' And they said: 'Let one of us lie down on his back on the floor of the coach, and we shall cover him with a sheet. Then we shall say that we are accompanying a dead man, and they will allow us to pass unmolested.' One of the men accordingly lay down in the coach, and his companions said to him: 'Be silent, close thine eyes, and pretend to be dead until we have passed the church which is being built!' When the coach reached the spot where Julian and Julius were raising the church, the two saints said to the travellers: 'Dearly beloved sons, be good enough to stop for a moment, to lend your hands to our labour!' The travellers answered: 'We cannot stop, because we are carrying a dead man in our coach!' And Saint Julian said to them: 'My children, why do you lie to me?' And they replied: 'Master, we do not lie! What we have told thee is true!' And Saint Julian said: 'Let it be as you say!' The travellers goaded their oxen, and went on: and when they had

proceeded some distance, they called to their companion, saying: 'Get up now, and help us to spur on the oxen, because we do not seem to be getting ahead!' But the man did not move; and they began to shake him and say: 'Art thou dreaming? Come, stir thyself!' As he continued to lie still, they uncovered him, and saw that he was dead. From then on, no one durst lie to the servants of God.

There was yet another Saint Julian. This one, who was of noble family, was hunting one day, while still a youth, and set out in pursuit of a stag. Suddenly the stag turned upon the young man, and said to him: 'Why dost thou pursue me, thou who art destined to be the murderer of thy father and mother?' The youth was so affrighted at these words that, in order to escape the fulfilment of the stag's presage, he went away secretly, travelled over boundless distances, and finally reached a kingdom where he took service with the king. He bore himself so manfully in war and in peace that the king dubbed him a knight, and gave him, as his wife, the widow of a very rich lord. Meanwhile Julian's parents, bereaved at his disappearance, wandered about the earth in search of their son; and one day they chanced to halt at the castle which was now Julian's home. But he happened to be away from home, and his wife received the two wayfarers. And when they had told her their story, she saw that they were her husband's parents; for he had doubtless often told her of them. So she tendered them a heartfelt welcome, and bade them take their rest in her own bed. The next morning, while she was at church, Julian returned home. He approached the bed to awaken his wife; and seeing two figures asleep beneath the coverings, he thought that his wife was lying with a lover. Without a word he drew his sword, and slew the two who lay asleep. Then, going out of the house, he came upon his wife returning from the church, and, aghast, asked her who the two persons were who slept in her bed. And his wife answered: 'They are thy parents, who have been long in quest of thee! And I gave them our bed for their rest.' Hearing this, Julian would have died of grief. He burst into tears, and said: 'What will become of me, wretch that I am? Now I have done my dear parents to death, and fulfilled what the stag foretold, all in trying to avoid it! Farewell, then, sweet my sister, for I shall not rest until I have received assurance of the forgiveness of God!' But she replied: 'Think not, beloved brother, that thou must set out without me! I have shared thy joys; it is



mine to share thy sorrows!’ Hence they took flight together, and went to live on the bank of a great river, where the crossing was fraught with danger; and there, while they did penance, they carried those who wished to cross from one shore to the other. They likewise received travellers in a hospice which they had built with their own hands. Long after this, in the middle of a freezing night, Julian, who had lain down overcome with weariness, heard the plaintive voice of a wayfarer asking to be set across the stream. Straightway he arose and ran to the stranger, who was half dead with cold, and carried him into his house, where he lighted a great fire to warm him. Then, seeing that he was still nearly frozen, he laid him in his own bed and covered him with care. But on a sudden this stranger, who was eaten with leprosy and horrible to look upon, changed into a shining angel. And as he rose into the air he said to his host: ‘Julian, the Lord has sent me to say to thee that thy repentance has been accepted, and that soon, with thy wife, thou shalt have rest in God.’ And the angel disappeared: and shortly thereafter, Julian and his wife, full of charity and good works, fell asleep in the Lord.

There was still another Julian, who, however, was not a saint, but an abominable monster: namely, Julian the Apostate. This Julian was first a monk, and made show of profound piety. But here is what Master John Beletth tells of him in his *Summa of the Offices of the Church*. A certain woman had three pots full of gold; and to hide the gold, she had covered it over with ashes. Then she had given the three pots into Julian’s keeping, because she regarded him as the holiest monk in the convent. But as soon as Julian had the pots in his possession, he looked into them to see what they contained. And he took out the gold which he found, filled the pots with ashes, and ran off to Rome with the stolen treasure. And he worked so cunningly that by means of this gold he became consul, and was later elevated to the imperial throne.

From his infancy he had been skilled in the art of black magic, and had a great liking for it. One day, while still a child, as we read in the *Tripartite History*, he called upon the demons in the absence of his teacher: and at once there appeared a numerous company of demons, in the form of Negroes or Ethiops. Then Julian, affrighted, hastened to make the sign of the cross; and instantly the demons vanished. When he recounted this experience to his teacher,

the teacher said: 'That was because the demons hate nothing so much as the sign of the cross!' Hence, when Julian attained the throne of the Empire, he recalled his adventure: and since he desired to have recourse to magic, he renounced his faith, destroyed the cross wherever he found it, and persecuted the Christians with all his might, in order to be the better obeyed by the demons.

We read in the *Lives of the Fathers* that when Julian invaded Persia, he sent a demon to the West to learn what was taking place there. But the evil spirit was forced to remain motionless for ten days before the cell of a monk, and then returned to Julian, unable to continue his journey. And he said to the emperor: 'For ten days I waited for this accursed monk to finish his prayers, because his praying prevented me from passing; but on the tenth day, since he still did not cease to pray, I had to retrace my steps and return here.' Infuriated, Julian declared that he would have his vengeance of the monk when he came to the desert.

The demons had promised him that he would conquer the Persians. One day his soothsayer said to a Christian: 'What, thinkest thou, doth the Son of the carpenter at this hour?' The Christian responded: 'He is fashioning Julian's coffin!' And when Julian reached Cæsarea in Cappadocia (as it is told in Saint Basil's history, and confirmed by Fulbert, Bishop of Chartres), Saint Basil came to meet him and presented him with four barley loaves. Julian was enraged, and refused to accept them; and in exchange, he sent a bundle of hay to Saint Basil, saying: 'Receive equal measure in return for thy gift!' Saint Basil replied: 'We at least have given thee what it is our custom to eat; but thou hast sent in return what thou givest to the beasts!' And Julian, indignant, made answer: 'When I have put down the Persians, I shall raze your city, and have the land ploughed up: and no longer shall it be called "man-bearing" but "grain-bearing."'

The following night, Saint Basil saw in a dream a multitude of angels gathered in the church of Our Lady; and in the midst of them was enthroned a woman, who said to them: 'Send the valiant Mercury to me at once, that he may slay the apostate Julian, who, in his arrogance, blasphemes my Son and me!' This Mercury was a Christian soldier whom Julian had put to death for his faith, and who was buried with his weapons in the church of Our Lady. And Saint Mercury at once appeared before the august assemblage, and, at the

Virgin's order, prepared for combat. Struck by this dream, Saint Basil, as soon as he arose, had the tomb of Saint Mercury opened, and saw that the saint was no longer there, nor his arms. He questioned the watchman of the church, who swore to him that he had seen the saint's weapons in their accustomed place the day before. On the morrow Saint Basil again ordered the tomb opened, and there lay the body of the saint with his arms; and his lance was red with blood. And soon afterwards a man who was returning from the army related that an unknown horseman had attacked Julian in the midst of his bodyguard, had transfixed him with his lance, and had made off so quickly that they had been unable to lay hands on him.

And the infamous Julian, before he died, dipped his hand in his own blood and scattered it in the air, saying: 'Galilean, Thou hast conquered!' Whereupon he breathed forth his wretched soul: and his body was abandoned by his own, and remained unburied. The Persians came, then, and tore off his skin, which their king stretched upon the throne where he held court.

## SEPTUAGESIMA

Septuagesima designates the time of the Fall, Sexagesima the time of the abandonment, Quinquagesima the time of forgiveness, and Quadragesima the time of spiritual penance.

Septuagesima begins with the Sunday on which, during the Mass, we sing: '*Circumdederunt me*' — 'The sorrows of death surround me,' — and lasts until the first Saturday after Easter.

It was instituted for a three-fold reason: it is intended as a compensation, as a sign, and as a representation.

Firstly, the holy Fathers decided that, in order to pay honour to the Feast of the Ascension, a solemn feast would be celebrated every Thursday, and this day was to be kept holy and free from fasting. In the beginning of Christianity it was celebrated like Sunday, and a solemn procession was held. It is from this that we have the popular saying that Thursday is a cousin of Sunday, for in olden days both were feast days. But as the feasts of the saints were established in the course of time, it became impossible to celebrate this feast every Thursday. And to compensate for these feasts, the Fathers prescribed a week of abstinence, which they called the Septuagesima.

Secondly, Septuagesima is a sign, and stands for the fall, the exile, and the tribulation of the human race, from Adam to the end of the world. These seven days signify the seven thousands of years which the world will last: for six thousand years elapsed from Adam to Christ's Ascension, and the time from the Ascension to the end of the world constitutes a seventh millennium, whose length God alone knows.

Finally, Septuagesima represents the seventy years of the Babylonian Captivity, which in turn signifies the time of our earthly pilgrimage. In this time of exile, the Church, loaded with tribulations and almost in despair, chants: 'The groans of death surrounded me; the sorrows of Hell encompassed me.' But to save it from falling into despair, the epistle and the gospel of Septuagesima propose a threefold remedy and a three-fold recompense. The remedy consists in labouring in the vineyard of the soul, then in running in the race of life, and finally in wrestling in the arena against the temptations of the Devil. And the three rewards are the penny given to the good labourer in the vineyard, the plaudits addressed to the runner, and the crown awarded to the wrestler.

## SEXAGESIMA

Sexagesima begins with the Sunday on which is read, in the Mass, the words: '*Exsurge, quare obdormis, Domine*' — 'Arise, why sleepest thou, O Lord?' and ends with the Wednesday after Easter.

It was instituted as a substitute, a sign, and a representation.

Firstly, Pope Melchiades and Saint Sylvester determined that the faithful might eat two meals on Saturday, so that they might not become weakened by prolonged fasting. But to replace the Saturday fasts, they added a week to Lent, and called it Sexagesima.

Secondly, Sexagesima signifies the widowhead of the Church, and her sorrow in the absence of her Spouse: for to widows was allotted the sixtieth part (*sexagesima*) of the crops. And for her comfort during the absence of her Spouse, two wings are given to the Church, namely the practise of the six works of mercy, and the fulfilment of the Ten Commandments. *Sexagesima*, indeed, means ten times six: ten is for the Decalogue, and six for the works of mercy.

Thirdly, Sexagesima represents the mystery of our Redemption,

or rather the six mysteries, which are the Incarnation, the Nativity, the Passion, the Descent into Hell, the Resurrection, and the Ascension.

## QUINQUAGESIMA

Quinquagesima begins with the Sunday when we sing: '*Esto mihi in Deum protectorem*' — 'Be thou unto me a God, a protector' — and ends with Easter Day.

It was instituted as a completion, a sign, and a representation.

Firstly, we were to fast for forty days, following the example of Christ, but in fact we fast for only thirty-six days, since the Sundays are not fast-days. And the Sundays are exempt from the fast both on account of the joy of the Resurrection, and in accordance with Christ's example, because He took food twice on the day of His Resurrection, namely once with the disciples at Emmaus, and again with the disciples who were gathered in Jerusalem, when He came into them, the doors being closed. In compensation for these four days taken from the time of fasting, the Church established the last four days of Quinquagesima. Then the clergy, wishing to give the people an example of sanctity, resolved to fast during the two preceding days: and so was formed a whole week of fasting, which was approved by Pope Telesphorus, as Saint Ambrose tells us, under the name of Quinquagesima.

Secondly, Quinquagesima signifies the time of the remission of sins: for every fifty years there used to be a jubilee year, during which debts were remitted, slaves were freed, and all recovered their goods.

Finally, Quinquagesima represents the state of beatitude. For every fifty years the slaves were set at liberty; fifty days after the immolation of the lamb, the Law was given; and fifty days after Easter the Holy Spirit came down from Heaven.

The epistle and gospel of Quinquagesima teach us that three things are necessary in order that the works of penance may be perfect: namely, charity, which the epistle recommends to us; the memory of the Passion of Our Lord; and faith, which is impressed upon us by the gospel, in the story of the cure of the blind man.

## QUADRAGESIMA

Quadragesima begins with the Sunday on which, in the Mass, there are sung the words: *Invocabit me* — 'He shall cry to me.' The Church which first in great distress cried out: 'The sorrows of earth surround me,' then uttered a sigh of relief and begged for help in the words: 'Arise, why sleepest thou, O Lord,' and 'Be thou unto me a God, a protector,' now shows that she has been heard by God, and says: 'He shall cry to me, and I will hear him: I will deliver him, and I will glorify him.'

The Lenten fast is explained by three reasons. Firstly, the gospel of Saint Matthew counts the forty generations preceding Christ. Secondly, Christ remained for forty days with His disciples after His Resurrection. Thirdly, the world is divided into four regions, the year into four seasons, the universe into four elements, human nature into four temperaments, the New Law into four gospels. And since we have disobeyed this Law, and likewise the Old Law, which comprised ten commandments, it is fitting that we should fast for four times ten, or forty days.

## THE FAST OF QUARTER-TENSE

The fast of quarter-tense, or ember-day fast, was instituted by Pope Calixtus. It occurs four times a year, according to the seasons. Four arguments justify this practise.

First, since the Spring is a humid season, we fast in order to chasten our pernicious humours, namely, the vices of the flesh. The Summer is a hot and dry season; hence we fast in order to temper the dryness of greed. The Autumn is also dry, but cold; therefore we fast to amend the cold dryness of pride. The Winter being a cold, wet season, we fast in order to thaw the cold of faithlessness and malice.

Second, the fast of quarter-tense is intended to remind us of the fast of the Jews, who fasted four times a year, before the Pasch, before Pentecost, before the feast of Tabernacles, and before the dedication of December.

Third, since man's body is formed of four elements, and his soul

of three faculties, we should fast four times a year, for three days each time.

Fourth, the Spring is related to childhood, the Summer to adolescence, the Fall to the age of manhood, and the Winter to the declining years of life. Hence we fast in the Spring in order to be as innocent as children, in the Summer to have the strength of youth, in the Fall to be ripe with merit, as befits the virile years, and in the Winter to acquire the wisdom and solid worth of mature old age. Or again, we should fast in Winter in order to atone for the faults which we have committed in the earlier seasons.

## SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

JANUARY 27

John, surnamed Chrysostom, the Golden-mouthed, was born at Antioch, the son of Secundus and Antura, who were both of noble blood. His life, his ancestry, his character, and the persecutions which he suffered, are retold at length in the *Tripartite History*.

After studying philosophy, he abandoned it in order to devote himself entirely to the things of God. Being ordained a priest, he showed such zeal for chastity that he was accused of unreasonable severity. He was fervent rather than gentle, and unhesitatingly put to execution whatever his conscience dictated; and this made him seem overbearing to those who did not know him well. But he had no equal for the accuracy and the clarity of his teaching, nor for his ardour in improving the morals of his people. Then he was made bishop of Constantinople, in the reign of the Emperors Honorius and Arcadius, and at the time when Damasus sat upon the throne of Saint Peter. He wished forthwith to reform the lives of his clergy, and in so doing, drew upon himself the hatred of all. He was called a madman, and maligned on all sides. Since he never invited anyone to dine with him, nor accepted invitations from others, it was bruited about that his manner of eating was revolting, whereas his only motive was abstinence, and the fact that the slightest excess of food or drink brought on severe headaches and pains of the stomach.

Despite all this, the people were attached to him because of his preaching, and paid no heed to the slanders of which he was the

subject. But the hatred in which he was held grew apace when he began to direct his attacks against persons in high places. And one thing in especial caused widespread excitement. The consul Eutropius, the emperor's favourite, wished to extend his jurisdiction over those who took refuge in the churches, and obtained from the emperor a law which abolished the right of sanctuary, and allowed fugitives to be taken from the churches. But a short time later Eutropius himself gave offense to the emperor, and fled to John Chrysostom's church, where he hid himself under the altar. Then the bishop came to him, and lashed him with the bitterest reproaches; after which he handed him over to the emperor, who had him beheaded. And there were many who resented the bishop's lack of pity for his enemy's misfortune. But he was always pitiless in his denunciation of the wicked, and this explains the hatred which he aroused. For example, Theophilus, the bishop of Alexandria, made every effort to deprive John of his see, and to install a priest named Isidore in his place. But the populace continued to defend John, and to be nourished with his teaching.

And John, not content with his vigorous government of the diocese of Constantinople, also busied himself with the maintaining of order in the neighbouring provinces, through the wise laws which he secured from the emperor. When he learned that idols were still worshipped in Phœnicia, he sent priests and monks thither, and ordered them to destroy the temples.

At that time a Celt called Gantias, a tyrannical barbarian who was perverted by the Arian heresy and swollen with inordinate ambition, was elected tribune of the soldiers. He asked the emperor to give the Arians a church in Constantinople. And the emperor, wishing to gratify him, besought John to release one of his churches to Gantias. But John, aflame with holy zeal, answered: 'Emperor, beware of giving your consent to this, and of handing over the holy places to dogs! And have no fear of this barbarian! Let me talk to him, and you conceal yourself, and listen to what is said. I shall stop his tongue so that he will not renew this demand!' The emperor overjoyed, therefore summoned both of them for the morrow. And when Gantias laid claim to a church for himself, John said to him: 'Every church is open to thee, and no one stays thee from going in to pray.' Gantias returned: 'I belong to another sect, and I have the right to demand a church for my cult, after all the services I have



rendered the State!' But John answered: 'Thou hast already received more than thou deservest! Thou hast been made tribune of the soldiers, and hast donned the toga of a consul. Think of what thou wert before, and what thy master's favour has made of thee! And recalling all this, be not ungrateful toward thy benefactor!' So he put him to silence. But Gantias lusting for power, sought to do by night what he could not do by day, and ordered a troop of barbarians to set fire to the emperor's palace. And it was then that they discovered with what aides Saint John guarded the city. For the horde of barbarians found a company of armed angels advancing upon them, and they were immediately put to flight. The men came and reported the affair to Gantias, who was mightily astonished, and wondered who these unknown soldiers might be. The next night, the same miracle was repeated. And the night following, Gantias himself led his men; and he was repulsed by an impregnable cohort, which he took to be made up of soldiers secretly recruited by the bishop, and kept hidden in the depths of the palace. He then quit Constantinople and went to Thrace, where he gathered a huge army of barbarians, and made ready to sack the whole country. The emperor was stricken with fear, and charged the bishop to go to Gantias as his ambassador; and John set out, full of courage, laying aside his enmity. And Gantias, acknowledging his wrongs and the just claims of the bishop, came out to meet him, kissed his hands, and ordered his sons to embrace his knees. For the power of the saint was so great that he could force the wildest and mightiest to become humble and respectful.

About the same time there arose in the Church a dispute about whether or not God had a body; and this dispute occasioned endless struggles. The majority of the monks, being simple men, were easily misled by those who maintained that God had a body. On the contrary, Theophilus, the Bishop of Alexandria, who knew the truth, had solemnly condemned those who attributed a human form to God: and the monks of Egypt, leaving their cells, marched on Alexandria and incited the populace to rebel against the bishop. Theophilus, sore afraid, said to them: 'You loom before me like the face of God!' And they replied: 'Since thou sayest fair that God has a face like our own, take good care to proclaim anathema against the books of Origen, which gives our opinion the lie! If thou dost not so, we shall consider thee a rebel against the emperor and against

God, and shall deal with thee accordingly!’ And he answered: ‘Spare me, and I shall do as you demand!’ Thus he turned aside the wrath of the monks. But it is to be remembered that only the simple-minded among the monks were deceived by so childish an error of doctrine.

In the meantime, in Constantinople, John upheld the true teaching, and all were in admiration of him. But the Arians, whose numbers were increasing, and who had a church outside the city, became so bold that one Sunday they pushed their way into John’s own church, singing their hymns and antiphons, and shouting derisively: ‘Look at the fools who believe that three make one!’ Then John, fearing that the simple folk would be drawn into heresy, commanded the faithful to gather in the churches at night, to hear sermons and to sing hymns. He also organized processions, in which silver crosses and silver torches were carried. Thereupon the Arians, in their rage, went so far as to commit murder. One night the eunuch Brison, who assisted John in the nocturnal offices, was struck in the groin with a stone; and several men of both parties were slain. As a result of this, and to put a stop to the disorder, the emperor formally enjoined the Arians from singing their hymns in public.

About this time Bishop Severian, the favourite of the emperor and the empress, came to Constantinople, and was affectionately welcomed by John: and when the latter set out for Asia, he left Severian in charge of his church. But instead of being true to his trust, Severian laboured to win for himself the favour which the populace bestowed upon John. And when the priest Serapion made all this known to John, Severian was so angry that he cried out: ‘If this Serapion does not die, Christ has not been made man!’ When this came to John’s ears, upon his return, he drove Severian out of the city as a blasphemer. This action much aggrieved the empress, who recalled Severian, and called upon John to be reconciled with him. But John refused; and the empress, to placate him, had to lay her son Theodosius upon the bishop’s lap.

About the same time, Theophilus, the bishop of Alexandria, unjustly expelled a saintly man named Dioscorus, and with him that Isidore whom in the past he had favoured. Both of them made their way to Constantinople, to lodge a complaint against him; but John, although he held them in high regard, refrained from taking their part until he should be more fully informed. Meanwhile it was

falsely reported to Theophilus that John had expressed himself in their favour: and Theophilus, being incensed at this, strove the more strongly to depose John from his episcopal see. Concealing his real aim, he wrote to the various bishops to tell them that he was condemning the books of Origen. He likewise hoodwinked the holy and glorious bishop of Cyprus, Epiphanius, who called his clergy together and forbade them to read Origen, and then wrote to John, exhorting him to follow his example. But John, unmoved by all the intrigues that were set afoot against him, continued to propound the pure doctrines of the Church.

Finally Theophilus made open show of his hatred, and revealed his desire of depriving John of his see. And at once a certain number of priests and imperial officials, who were consumed with eagerness to be rid of the bishop, rallied to his enemy's assistance.

Shortly thereafter, Epiphanius came to Constantinople bearing the condemnation of the works of Origen with him. Out of respect for his friend Theophilus, he refused John's offer of hospitality. And so great was the esteem in which he was held that at his demand, many people seconded Origen's condemnation. Others, however, declined to do so; and among them was Theotinus, Bishop of Scythia, a man renowned for the uprightness of his life. He said to Epiphanius: 'Truly, I have no wish to injure him who long since rests in peace, nor lightly dare to damn that which our Fathers held to be good; for I can find no false teaching in his writings. Those who disdain them do not know them; Athanasius, however, the champion of the Council of Nicæa, quoted him as a defender of his faith against the Arians, and regarded his writings as he did his own when he said, "The industrious and admirable Origen proves this of the Son of God, that He is coeternal with the Father."' During all this time, John patiently suffered Epiphanius' meddling in the affairs of his church, which was wholly unwarranted. He asked only that Epiphanius take his proper place among his bishops. But Epiphanius replied that he would do nothing of the sort, as long as John refused to be done with Dioscorus and to condemn Origen. And presently Epiphanius, confronted with John's resistance, began to attack him as a defender of heretics. Thereupon John wrote him as follows: 'Many things hast thou done in violation of the laws, Epiphanius! Thou hast ordained priests in my church, thou hast celebrated the offices upon thine own authority, thou hast failed to

respond to my invitations. And now if the people rise against thee, be it upon thine own head!' Upon receiving this letter, Epiphanius departed from Constantinople. But before he left, he wrote to John: 'It is my hope that thou mayest not die a bishop!' To which John retorted: 'It is my hope that thou mayest not return alive to thy homeland!' And both of these prophecies were fulfilled; for Epiphanius died on the return journey, and John was finally deposed, and died in exile.

This Epiphanius, whose relics, at a later time, had the power of expelling evil spirits, was a man of wonderful liberality. One day, when he had given in alms the entire treasury of his church, a stranger suddenly appeared, bringing him a bag of gold, and as suddenly vanished; and no one ever knew whence he came. Another time certain wicked men, wishing to trick Epiphanius into giving them money, contrived the following ruse. One of them stretched out on the ground, pretending to be dead, while the other, standing nearby, made great show of weeping, and moaned that he had no money with which to bury his friend. Epiphanius came up, prayed for the repose of the dead man's soul, made provision for his burial, comforted the survivor, and went off. At once the man shook his accomplice, saying: 'Up with you, and off we go for a feast and a frolic!' But he shook him in vain, for the wretch was dead. Stricken to the heart, the impostor ran to confess his sin to Epiphanius, beseeching him to restore his comrade to life. Epiphanius consoled him as best he could, but refused to raise the dead man, to the end that the mischance might serve as an example to all who might be tempted to delude the ministers of God.

However, when Epiphanius had left Constantinople, John learned that it was the Empress Eudoxia who had turned the venerable bishop against him. So, with his wonted zeal, he delivered a sermon before the people, in which he spoke of all women in the harshest terms. Everyone took it that this sermon was directed at the empress. And when she heard of it, she complained to the emperor, and demanded vengeance. At her insistence, the emperor finally convoked the synod long sought by Theophilus, and strenuously opposed by John.

At once Theophilus summoned all the bishops who were hostile to John: and when they came together at Constantinople, they no longer concerned themselves with the writings of Origen, but came out openly as John's adversaries, and cited him to appear before them.

But John, despite four demands to appear, refused to deliver himself to his enemies, and insisted upon the calling of a universal synod. Whereupon the bishops condemned him, although they could accuse him of nothing except his refusal to surrender himself to them. As a result, the emperor ordered that he be sent into exile without delay: but the populace, very much aroused, rose up in his behalf, and refused to allow him to set foot outside his church, demanding instead that his condemnation be brought before a general council. Then John, in order to prevent the popular unrest from spreading, set out without the people's knowledge, and went into exile. But when the populace became aware of this, they rebelled all the more; and many of his former enemies came over to his side, perceiving that he had been slandered.

All this while, Severian, of whom we have already spoken, was traducing John even in his own church. He said that even if John had not been guilty of any other fault, his pride was enough to justify his condemnation. But this impudent assertion so inflamed the fury of the people against the bishops and the emperor himself, that Eudoxia was forced to urge her husband to recall from exile the man whom she had helped to drive out. Moreover, a violent earthquake had wrought great damage in the city, and the populace had agreed that this was a punishment for the unjust expulsion of their bishop.

Ambassadors were therefore sent to John to pray him to return at once. Thrice he refused; but the third time he was brought back to Constantinople by force, and all the townspeople came to meet him with candles and lanterns. But he then refused to sit upon his episcopal throne until the synod had withdrawn the sentence which it had pronounced against him; so again by force the people bore him to his throne, and prevailed upon him to renew his preaching. Theophilus at once took flight from Constantinople. When he arrived at Hierapolis, the bishop of this city had just died, and his see had been offered to a holy monk named Ammon; but Ammon firmly declined to accept it. When Theophilus pressed him to consent, he feigned to yield, and said: 'Tomorrow the will of God will be done!' On the morrow, when they again besought him to accept the episcopate, he said: 'Let us first offer a prayer to the Lord!' And when he had finished his prayer, they saw that his life had come to an end at the same moment.

Meanwhile John persevered vigourously in his teaching. In a

public square facing the Church of Saint Sophia, a silver statue of the Empress Eudoxia had been raised, and games were being held there in her honour. John was incensed thereby, taking the performance for an insult to his church. He raised his voice with his usual fearlessness, and instead of imploring the emperor to put an end to the scandal, he loosed the full power of his eloquence in denouncing the spectacle itself. This offended the empress deeply; and again she began to use every means to have John condemned by a synod of bishops. It was on this occasion that John delivered in his church the famous homily which begins: 'Once more Herodias raves, once more she dreams of seeing the head of John borne in upon a dish!' And Eudoxia's fury was redoubled.

At this juncture one of the serving men of the empress sought to kill John, but the people laid hold on him, and would have put him to death had not the prefect spirited him away. Some days later, a priest's retainer threw himself upon the bishop to put him to death. He was seized by the faithful, and struck down three of them; and when the crowd gathered, he slew several more. But the populace continued to keep John under guard, surrounding his house night and day to ward off attacks.

At the behest of Eudoxia a new synod of bishops met at Constantinople, for the purpose of condemning John. On the eve of Christmas the emperor forbade John to give Communion before he had answered the charges brought against him. The bishops, for their part, condemned him a second time, accusing him this time of resuming his episcopal see after he had been dethroned. And as Easter drew near, the emperor prohibited John from setting foot in his church, since two synods had condemned him. At his order, John was driven out of Constantinople, and banished to a small town near Pontus on the frontier of the empire, in the neighbourhood of a cruel tribe of barbarians. But God in His goodness did not long leave His loyal athlete in this predicament. John, worn out by his long journey, suffering cruelly from pains in the head, exposed to the unbearable ardour of the sun, soon gave up the ghost, at Cumana, the fourteenth day of September.

At the moment of his death, a fearful hailstorm struck Constantinople and the surrounding country; and all were of opinion that this was a sign of the wrath of God at the unjust judgement borne

against John. This belief was strengthened, four days later, by the sudden death of Eudoxia.

The bishops of the West, sore stricken at the death of the admirable doctor, refused to have communion with the bishops of the East until due honour was paid to the sacred name of Saint John Chrysostom. And the devout Theodosius, the son of Arcadius, had the saint's remains brought back to Constantinople, and invoked them piously, entreating the saint to intercede in behalf of his parents, Arcadius and Eudoxia, who had wronged him unknowingly.

This Theodosius was so clement in the exercise of his power that he never wished to pronounce sentence of death against those who did him ill. In this regard, he said: 'Alas, why can I not rather recall the dead to life?' His court was like a monastery, and he ceased not to read the Sacred Books. His wife, Eudoxia, wrote many poems in heroic measures. He also had a daughter, likewise called Eudoxia, whom he gave in marriage to Valentinian, his associate on the imperial throne.

John Chrysostom died about the year of the Lord 400. We may add that all that is here written is taken directly from the *Tripartite History*.

## SAINT IGNATIUS

FEBRUARY I

Ignatius comes from *ignem patiens*, which means he who has experienced the fire of divine love.

Saint Ignatius was a disciple of Saint John the Evangelist, and became Bishop of Antioch. At one time he wrote the following letter to the Virgin Mary: 'To Mary, who bore the Christ, her humble servant Ignatius sends greetings. As a neophyte and a disciple of John, to whom thy dying Son confided thee, I come to thee for strength and consolation. For I have heard many strange things told of thy Son Jesus, and am sorely affrighted. And I appeal to thee, who wert so close to Him and who knewest the secrets of His heart, to attest the truth of these things. Farewell, and grant my prayer that the neophytes who are with me, may be fortified from you, through you, and in you!' And our dear Lady

replied to him in these words: 'To Ignatius, beloved disciple, the humble handmaid of Jesus Christ. All that is true which you learned of Jesus from John. Believe it firmly, be faithful to it; cling to the Christian faith and live thy life accordingly. Moreover, I shall come with John to see thee and all those who are with thee. Have courage, and persevere in the faith! And be not frightened of persecution, but rather may thy spirit be strong and rejoice in God thy Saviour.'

The words and teachings of Saint Ignatius bore so much weight that even the renowned and excellent doctor, Dionysius, the disciple of Saint Paul, readily invoked his authority to confirm his own doctrine. He himself tells us, indeed, in his book *Of the Names of God*, that certain persons had brought forward the objection that the word *love* was not suited to express the attitude of the Christian toward God, because one could only honour God, not love Him; and to parry this objection, he goes on: 'Did not Saint Ignatius write, "My love was nailed to the cross?"'

We read in the *Tripartite History* that one day Saint Ignatius heard angels singing antiphons on the summit of a mountain. It was then that he determined to have the antiphons sung in his church, and to have the psalms sung with the same intonation as the antiphons.

After a long period of prayer for the peace of the Church (he feared the dangers which menaced it not for himself but for the weak), he presented himself before the Emperor Trajan, whose reign began in the year 100, who, being puffed up with the pride of his conquests, was threatening all Christians with death. And Saint Ignatius professed to Trajan that he was a Christian; whereupon the emperor loaded him with chains, placed ten soldiers over him as guards, and sent him to Rome, making known to him that there he would be thrown to the wild beasts. While he was on the way to Rome, he wrote letters to all the churches, to strengthen them in the faith of Christ. In one of these letters, addressed to the church at Rome, as we read in the *Ecclesiastical History*, he beseeches the faithful to do nothing to hinder his martyrdom. And he continues: 'From Syria to Rome, by sea and by land, I am already at grips with the beasts, since I am bound day and night to ten soldiers set to guard me, who are as ferocious as leopards, and become more cruel in the measure that they are treated kindly. Their wickedness



teaches me much, yet am I not hereby justified. Ah! Would that I might even now enjoy the beasts which are prepared for me in Rome! And I pray that they may be swift to torture and destroy me, and may be enticed to devour me, lest perchance they be afraid to touch my body, as they have feared to touch other martyrs. But if they be reluctant to come on, I shall do them violence, I shall throw myself upon them, to be devoured. Ah! Indulge me, my little children! What is best for me, no one knows better than I. Now do I begin to be the true disciple of Christ, desiring naught of all things that meet the eye, that I may find Jesus Christ. Fire, cross, wild beasts, the crushing of my bones, the sundering of my members, the gnashing of my whole body, all the torments of the Devil — let them all come upon me, if only I may taste the joy of Christ!

In Rome, Trajan summoned him, and said to him: 'Ignatius, wherefore dost thou incite my subjects in Antioch to revolt by converting them to the Christian faith?' Ignatius replied: 'Please to God I might convert thee also, for by this means wouldst thou win the sole true and lasting power!' Trajan said: 'Offer sacrifice to the gods, and I will name thee chief among my priests!' To which Ignatius said: 'I will not sacrifice to thy gods, nor does the title which thou offerest entice me. Do with me as thou wilt, thou shalt not change me!' Then Trajan said to the torturers: 'Beat him about the shoulders with lead-weighted whips, rip open his sides with iron blades, and grate his wounds with sharp stones!' When Ignatius was unmoved amidst these torments, Trajan said: 'Let burning coals be brought, and make him walk barefoot over them!' And Ignatius said: 'Nor fire nor boiling water can quench in me the fire of the love of Christ!' Said Trajan: 'By witchcraft only dost thou bear up under these torments!' But Ignatius answered: 'Nay, Christians are not sorcerers, and our law condemns them. You, on the contrary, practise witchery, by adoring idols!' Then said Trajan: 'Lay open his back with iron claws, and inflame the wounds with salt!' But Ignatius was content to say: 'What are the sufferings of this world, compared to the glory that is to come?' Then Trajan had him bound in chains once more, and confined in a dungeon without food or water; and he declared that in three days, Ignatius would be thrown to the wild beasts in the Circus.

Three days later, the emperor, the Senate, and the whole populace

gathered in the Circus to witness the combat between the bishop of Antioch and the beasts. And Trajan said: 'Since this Ignatius makes show of so much arrogance and obduracy, let his limbs be bound, and loose two lions upon him, that there may be nothing left of his wretched body!' And Ignatius turning toward the crowd, said: 'Romans, ye who stand by to watch this struggle, know that my pain will not be unrewarded, because it is not for any arrogance, but for my piety, that I suffer here!' And according to the *Ecclesiastical History*, he further said: 'I am the wheat of Christ: let me be ground in the teeth of the beasts, that I may be made into a clean bread!' Hearing this, the emperor said: 'Great is the long-suffering of these Christians! Where is the Greek who would endure so much for his God?' And Ignatius replied: 'Not of myself do I have the strength to endure, but by the help of Christ!' After this he began to provoke the lions, goading them on to devour him. And at last the two terrible beasts leapt upon him and strangled him; but nothing could force them to eat his flesh. At the sight of this, Trajan was filled with astonishment. He left the Circus, with orders that no one should molest those who might seek to remove the body of Ignatius. And the Christians bore the body away, and buried it with honours.

Some time later, Trajan received a letter from Pliny the Younger, in which Pliny interceded in behalf of the Christians, and gave them high praise for their virtues. Then the emperor had remorse for the ills which he had heaped upon Ignatius; and he decided that thenceforth the Christians should no longer be sought out and persecuted, and that only those who made public profession of their faith should be punished.

It is further narrated that amidst all his torments, Ignatius never ceased to call upon the name of Jesus Christ. And when the executioners asked him why he repeated this name so often, he answered: 'It is because I bear this name written in my heart!' And in fact, after his death his heart was opened, and there the name of Jesus Christ was found written in letters of gold. And at the sight of this miracle, many pagans were converted.

In his commentaries on the psalm *Qui habitat*, Saint Bernard says of this saint: 'The great Saint Ignatius, follower of the disciple beloved of Jesus, and himself a martyr, greeted Mary in his letters

## THE PURIFICATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

FEBRUARY 2

The Purification of Mary is celebrated on the fortieth day after the Nativity of Our Lord. The feast has three names: Purification, *Hypopanti*, and *Candelaria*, that is, Candlemas.

It is called Purification because on the fortieth day after the birth of Our Lord, the Blessed Virgin came to the Temple to purify herself in accordance with the custom of the Law, even though she was not subject to the law. For the Law decrees, as is set forth in the book of Leviticus, that a woman who has conceived with seed and borne a male child, shall be unclean for seven days. During that time she shall have naught to do with anyone and shall not enter into the Temple; but when the seven days are over, then she shall be clean to all. But she shall not enter the Temple for another thirty-three days. But when the forty days are over, she shall go into the Temple on the fortieth day, and bring the child with her, and offer up her gifts. But should she bear a maid child, she should avoid all for fourteen days, and the Temple for eighty days.

There are three reasons why the Lord has commanded that the little boys should be brought into the Temple on the fortieth day. The first is, that by this we shall know that at the fortieth day after conception the soul is infused into the temple of the body, just as it is actually brought into the real Temple. This we read in the *Scholastic History*; yet the physicians say that the body is completed in forty-six days. The second reason is this: the soul, which is stained when it is infused into the body on the fortieth day, is cleansed of all stain on the fortieth day by sacrifice in the Temple. Thirdly, we are to know that all will enter into the Temple of Heaven, on condition that they observe the Ten Commandments with the faith of the four evangelists. But the woman who bears a daughter shall avoid the Temple twice as long, for the

body of a girl requires twice as much time for its completion. For while a boy's body is completed in forty days and the soul infused into it usually on the fortieth day, the girl's body is not completed until the end of the eightieth day and does not receive the soul until that day. But why the female body requires twice as much time to complete itself in the mother's womb as the male body, and only receives the soul at so late a time, can be explained by three spiritual reasons, disregarding the physical ones. Firstly, since Christ wished to be born as a man, He desired to honour man and to endow him with more grace; for this reason He allowed boys to grow more quickly, and the mothers to be purified the sooner. The second reason is that woman has sinned more than man and should therefore be unhappier; and as her suffering has been doubled on earth, so too should it be doubled in the womb. The third reason is that woman has troubled God more than man has troubled Him, because she sinned more; for God is troubled by our sins. For He Himself says: 'But thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thy iniquities,' and again, 'They are become troublesome to me, I am weary of bearing them.'

The Virgin Mary was not constrained to obey the law of purification, since her childbearing was not due to human contact, but to the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit. Nonetheless she was minded to submit to this law for four reasons: namely, to give an example of humility; to do homage to the Law, which her divine Son had come to fulfil, and not to destroy; to put a term to the Jewish purification, and to mark the beginning of the Christian purification, which is the work of faith, and purifies the heart; and to teach us to purify ourselves throughout our whole life.

The Virgin came therefore to the Temple, presented her Son, and redeemed Him for the price of five pieces of money. For the firstborn of the twelve tribes might be redeemed, whereas the firstborn of the Levites could not be redeemed, and, once they had come to adulthood, were all obliged to serve in the Temple. And since Our Lord was of the tribe of Juda, He had to be redeemed. For Him the Blessed Virgin offered to the Lord a pair of turtle doves, which was the offering of the poor, a yearling lamb being the offering of the rich. It might be asked, in this regard, whether the Virgin Mary, who had received a large sum of gold from the Magi, could not have bought a lamb. But we may think, as Saint Bernard says,

that instead of keeping this gold for herself, the Blessed Virgin had at once given it to the poor, or perhaps saved it for the seven years of her sojourn in Egypt. Or again, it may be that the Magi had not bestowed a large sum of gold, but a slight sum, as a symbolic gift.

In the second place, this feast is called the Presentation, because on this day Christ was presented in the Temple, where Simeon and Anna also welcomed Him. And Simeon took Him in his arms, and blessed Him, saying:

Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord,  
according to thy word in peace:  
because my eyes have seen thy salvation;  
which thou hast prepared before the face of  
all peoples:  
a light to the revelation of the Gentiles,  
and the glory of thy people Israel.

Thus, in his canticle, Simeon called Jesus by three names: salvation, light, and the glory of the people of Israel.

In the third place, this feast is called Candlemas, because on this day the faithful carry lighted candles. And there are four reasons for this custom.

It was instituted first to remedy a pagan superstition. For of old the Romans, in order to honour the goddess Februa, the mother of Mars, used to light up the whole city with candles and torches, in the first days of February. This was done every five years, and its purpose was to procure the favour of the goddess, so that her son Mars would insure their victory over their enemies. The period of five years between these feasts was called a *lustrum*. In the month of February the Romans also honoured Pluto and the other gods of the underworld. In order to win their good will for the souls of the dead, the people offered them solemn victims, and passed an entire night singing their praises, with lighted torches and candles. The women especially were devoted to this feast, in accordance with one of the myths of their religion. For the poets had said that Pluto, enamoured of Proserpine's beauty, had carried her off and made her his wife: and her parents, not knowing what had become of her, were a long time searching for her with torches and candles. In memory of this, the Roman women went in procession, in order to

obtain the favour of Proserpine. As it is always difficult to wipe out such a custom, Pope Sergius decreed that in order to give to this one a Christian meaning, the Blessed Virgin should be honoured each year on this day, a blessed candle being carried in the hand to this end. Thus the ancient usage was preserved, but at the same time transformed by a new intention.

Candlemas was established secondly to show forth the purity of the Virgin Mary. To impress her purity upon the minds of all, the Church ordered that we should carry lighted candles, as if to say: 'Most blessed Virgin, thou hast no need of purification; on the contrary, thou art all light and all purity!' Such indeed was Mary's innocence that it shone forth even outside of her, and quelled any urgency of the flesh in others. Thus the Jews tell us that although Mary was surpassing fair, no man could ever look upon her with desire.

Thirdly, the Candlemas procession is a symbol of the procession of Mary, Joseph, Simeon, and Anna, when they presented the Child Jesus in the Temple.

Finally Candlemas is intended for our edification. It teaches us that if we wish to be purified in the sight of God, we should be sincere in faith, unselfish in conduct, and righteous in intention. For the lighted candle signifies faith with good works. And the wick which is hidden in the wax represents the right intention of which Saint Gregory speaks when he says: 'Let your works be visible to all, but let your intention be hidden; so that we may give the example of good works to our neighbours, and yet ever desire that our virtues be unknown, by the intention we have of pleasing God alone.'

A certain noble lady had great devotion to the Blessed Virgin. She had had a chapel built near her house, and assisted daily at the Mass which her chaplain offered in honour of the Virgin. But it befell one day, on the Feast of the Purification, that this lady was unable to be present at the Mass, either because her chaplain was absent, or else, as others suggest, because she had given away all her attire for charity, and had not wherewith to clothe herself for the Mass. She threw herself in despair at the foot of the Virgin's altar, which stood, no doubt, in her chamber. Then all at once, being rapt in ecstasy, she felt herself being borne into a beautiful church, into which came a troop of virgins; and at their head walked

the fairest among them, crowned with a diadem. And when all were seated according to their order, a company of youths came to take their places beside them, also according to their order. Then appeared a man carrying a huge bundle of candles, which he distributed to all who were present, beginning with the Virgin who bore the crown, and who was seated in the place of honour. This man came at last to the lady, and presented her in the same manner with a candle, which she received with joy. Thereupon she turned her eyes to the choir of the church, and saw two acolytes moving toward the altar, followed by a subdeacon, then a deacon, and lastly a priest wearing the sacred vestments, as though to celebrate the Mass. And she saw that the two acolytes were Saint Vincent and Saint Lawrence, that the deacon and the subdeacon were angels, and that the priest was Christ Himself. The Mass began, and when the Confiteor had been said, two fair youths arose and began to sing, and all the assistants accompanied them in chorus. When they came to the Offertory, the Queen of the virgins, with the other virgins and all the assistants, came, as was the custom, to kneel before the Priest and offer their candles to him. Only the matron remained standing in the rear of the church. Then the Queen of the virgins sent someone to tell her that it was not seemly to make the Priest wait so long. But the matron replied that the Priest should continue His Mass, because she did not wish to give up her candle. Another messenger was despatched to her: but she answered that it was her pious intention to keep the candle which had been given to her. Then a third messenger was sent to her, and was ordered to take away her candle, by force if need be. And as she still refused to yield it up, they struggled for possession of the candle, until it was broken, in such a way that one half remained in the lady's hand, while the messenger held the other. Thereupon the lady awoke from her vision, and perceived that she held the half of a candle in her hand. Seeing this, she poured forth prayers of thanksgiving to Our Lady, who had allowed her to assist at Mass — and at such a Mass! — on that day. And afterwards she cherished the candle as a most precious relic; and whosoever touched it was cured of every ill.

There was another woman who was pregnant. One night she dreamt that she was carrying a blood-red flag. Soon after she awoke, she became senseless, and the Devil caused her to believe

that the Christian faith which she had always honoured, was fixed within her breasts and yet that it constantly went away from her. No one was able to cure her of this mania. But one time, on the eve of Candlemas, she spent the night in a church of Our Lady and the next morning she was cured of all her ills.

## SAINT BLAISE

FEBRUARY 3

Blaise comes from *blandus*, sweet; or it comes from *bela*, robe, and *sior*, small. For he was sweet in his speech, clothed with the robe of virtue, and small through the humility of his actions.

Blaise had won such fame by his gentleness and holiness that the Christians of Cappadocia elected him their bishop: and when the persecutions of Diocletian compelled him to quit his bishopric, he took refuge in a cave, and there led the life of a hermit. The birds brought his food to him, and came to him in flocks, not flying away until he had blessed them. And when any of them was ailing, it came to him, and was restored to health.

One day the governor's men had hunted over the countryside without finding any game; and coming to the place where Saint Blaise had set up his dwelling, they saw a great gathering of birds and other animals crowding about the hermit as if to seek his protection. And as it turned out, the huntsmen could not lay a hand on any of them. Overcome with surprise, they made this known to their master, who ordered the hermit to be brought to him. That very night, Saint Blaise thrice saw Christ in a dream, saying to him: 'Arise, and offer sacrifice to Me!' Whereupon the soldiers came up and said: 'Come, the governor summons thee!' And Saint Blaise answered: 'Welcome, my children! I see now that God has not forgotten me!'

Throughout the journey he preached incessantly and performed many miracles in the sight of his warders.

A woman brought to him her son, who had a fishbone caught in his throat; and setting him down at the hermit's feet, tearfully besought him to heal the child. And Saint Blaise, extending his



# Isaia 4 beatrix Albdon 3 semne 1 Eusebius C xii

ut in ipso consilio morietur sed videtur  
qui advenit ad fidem conuersi sunt et non  
habebant oibus passionibus beatissimis  
et consilio videtur passi autem sunt cum  
annis domini et lxxxvii

**A**ldon 3 semne sub anno 7p  
ante passi sunt. Et enim deus  
impator babiloni a cum aliis primum  
supraisset quosdam christianos ibi inuenit  
quos scilicet ad urbem cordulū deducere. di  
uersis ibidem supposito consumuntur. Et  
duo sibi regni. f. aldon et semne in  
finitas sepelitur. Vnde de hoc amphi  
n et deo pūmā. tōmā pā cū vinctis  
mthome dūmā. vbi in conspectu denij  
et semne inuenerunt. aut sacrificia et  
rerū suarū. nēpe libitū. autē mō. si  
bus bestiarū. deuotū iubent. Contem  
pneres unq. et expueres et filāctū  
ad theatri pūmā. et ad eos duo  
leones et vīsi quatuor dūmā. Et cū  
fōs nō tangeret si rūs dūmā. missio  
gladijs in eos omniū. et ligane pe  
dibus trahi sūt et iactati an simulacra  
plus. Et in ibi triduo iacuisse. qm  
subdūmā. eos collegit et in domo sua  
sepelitur passi sūt cū annos domini et

**E**usebius dicit ab eu q. e. bon  
et se be q. di. eloquia. il. stanobit  
eusebius sonat cultus hpc nāq. tūm  
sāstianae sui boitāt. eloquētia in de  
fensioe fidei et stanone i cōpāna fidi  
ar bonū cultū in veniētia dēd. Euse  
bius ip. vgo exiō dū adqur cathetu  
minis esset ab eusebio ipā baptiz. l  
et nō. si se pēp. in quo baptiz. manij  
anglicū vīte sūt. que ipm de par. fōte  
leuauerūt. apanona quēdā eius pūmā  
tudine captarū ipm nūmū. uellet  
adūc. custodiēti bz anglicū pūmā  
iō potuit. Vnde pō mane ad pēdē cia p  
ndit. et ab eolamē tūm. uenā penit  
Ordianus p. f. r. tanta sūtāt ennuat.  
ut i missaz solempnis inē ma. cū  
mīstetū anglicū apperet. Et q. l. f. cū  
aeriana pēp. totā vīalā mīficeret

impator constantino eide hēsi fauēt.  
Inius p. eusebiū in vīalā epm cō  
fessant. q. nūc obtinebat inuē alias  
urbes ytalie p. r. p. p. q. d. hēc et n  
audientes oēs fōres eēt claudī se  
erūt. At eusebius urbe ingressus  
an oīstū inuēis eēt que est beate  
mae genua flexit. et omnia oīstā  
oīstā sua mag. apēuit. Atq. i. mēdi  
olanen epm hēc et n. pūmā corrup  
tū de epatu eient et p. eo dromis  
vīu. mīstolū ordiāuit. Sūp. eū. 7  
totā emā. m. oīstā. pūmā. Et uo  
cū cōstān. impator. 3 eusebiū  
plū. m. indigētia. m. l. epō. cōfī  
lū cōuocauit et drom. m. anē. sūt  
m. l. ad eusebiū cōfī. dē. f. f.  
Cū sūmā malina i m. l. pūa  
leuē uenit. cōtēp. et sua fēner  
tūc opposuit. Vnde imp. statuit. cō  
cūc. et n. f. i. m. mēdiolanen vī  
be que p. p. cōfī. l. cē. d. i. u.  
Vbi n. eusebiū dē. f. vī. d. i. u. sūt  
rūmōs f. d. sūt. dē. f. d. i. u. m.  
epm mēdiolanen ar. x. x. p. d. e. u. d.  
f. d. i. f. e. s. t. s. u. b. s. a. r. i. b. e. f. i. d. a. u. d. i. o. s. e. u. s.  
b. u. s. d. e. v. r. b. e. s. u. a. c. r. i. s. t. i. m. e. d. i. o. l. a. n. i.  
p. f. e. c. t. u. r. u. s. e. t. s. e. m. u. l. t. a. p. a. s. s. i. z. p. o. n. e.  
Cū i. g. ad quēdā pūmā uenisset ut  
mēdiolanen p. r. e. t. i. n. a. u. s. e. t. a. p. r. e.  
f. l. i. n. s. e. x. t. i. o. e. o. i. u. b. e. r. i. t. a. d. eū uenit  
et pūmā cū p. r. i. o. s. i. n. e. m. u. b. n. a. t. o. r. a. l. o.  
t. i. s. p. o. r. t. a. u. i. t. Tūc ei p. d. n. i. o. d. r. o. m. i.  
o. b. i. u. i. u. i. t. e. t. a. d. p. e. d. e. s. e. u. s. p. n. d. e. s. u. e.  
mā p. o. s. t. u. l. a. u. i. t. Et i. g. eusebius ab  
impator. n. m. i. n. o. n. b. l. a. d. i. n. o. s. p. o. s.  
s. e. t. f. l. e. c. t. i. cōrā oīstā. d. i. x. i. t. Vōs dū  
t. i. o. f. i. l. i. u. m. m. i. n. o. r. e. e. t. p. r. e. c. u. r. g. f. i. l. i. u.  
m. e. u. d. i. s. p. l. i. n. p. r. i. u. l. i. s. h. e. n. o. e. n. i. d. i. s.  
c. a. p. u. l. i. s. e. s. u. p. m. e. u. m. n. e. p. l. i. a. s. u. p. e. r.  
p. a. t. r. e. m. q. u. i. a. i. l. l. i. v. a. r. i. o. s. cōm. m. u. n. i. s. t. a.  
n. c. r. o. g. r. a. p. h. i. q. u. e. s. i. p. s. a. n. e. i. o. b. t. u.  
l. e. z. i. t. A. r. i. l. l. e. h. e. q. u. a. s. i. p. o. s. t. f. i. l. i. u. f. r. i.  
b. ā. cū aūte p. f. i. l. i. u. m. i. n. c. e. d. i. t. n. o.  
i. u. p. n. u. s. u. b. s. a. r. i. b. a. s. i. v. i. l. i. s. a. f. e. b. i. t.  
E. n. i. p. m. u. t. u. d. i. s. u. n. t. s. q. e. r. o. g. r. a. p. h. i.



hands over him, prayed God to cure him; and instantly the child was made well.

Another woman, who was very poor, came and asked the saint to obtain the return of her only pig, which had been carried off by a wolf. And the saint, smiling, said to her: 'Good woman, be not troubled! Thy pig will be returned to thee!' And at that very moment the wolf was seen running toward them, bringing back to the widow the pig which he had stolen.

As soon as he was come to the city, Saint Blaise was thrown into prison. On the morrow the governor arraigned him, and sought at first to beguile him with soft words, saying: 'Greetings, Blaise, friend of the gods!' and Blaise returned: 'Greetings to thee likewise, excellent governor! But give not the name of gods to the demons who are burning in Hell with those who honour them!' Infuriated, the governor had him beaten with rods and led back to prison. And Blaise said to him: 'Fool! Thinkest thou that thy punishments will rob me of the love of a God Who is within me, and Who gives me the strength to bear any pain whatsoever?' And when the widow to whom he had restored the pig learned that he was in prison, she killed the pig and sent the head and feet to the saint, together with a loaf and a tallow candle. And Saint Blaise, after he had appeased his hunger, sent word to the widow: 'Offer a candle every year in the church which shall bear my name, and it will be well with thee, and with all who shall do in like manner!' This the widow did each year, and lived prosperously thenceforth.

Meanwhile the governor, seeing that he could not force the saint to worship the idols, had him bound to a stake, and commanded that his flesh be torn with iron spikes; after which he was again led back to gaol. Seven women, however, followed the saint, and gathered up the drops of his blood. The governor ordered them to be seized, and tried to force them to sacrifice to the gods. But they said: 'If it be thy wish that we adore thy gods, have them brought to the bank of the pond; and when they have been washed, we shall adore them!' To this the governor gladly consented. And the seven women laid hands on the idols, and threw them into the middle of the pond, saying: 'Now we shall see if these be gods!' And when the governor, angered beyond measure, laboured his officers

with reproaches for allowing such a sacrilege, the seven women said to him: 'If these idols had been gods, they would surely have foreseen what we had in mind to do to them!' Then the prefect made ready molten lead, iron rakes, and seven iron helmets reddened in the fire, and, beside these, seven linen robes. And he told the women to choose between the robes and the most frightful torments. Then one of the women, who was the mother of two small children, laid hold of the robes and threw them into the fire. And her babes said to her: 'Dearest mother, do not leave us behind, but as thou hast plenished us with the sweetness of thy milk, so now fill us with the sweetness of the Kingdom of Heaven!' Then the governor had them lashed to the stake, and the executioners laid open their flesh with iron points. But their flesh remained as white as snow, and from it milk spurted forth instead of blood. And while they were undergoing these tortures, an angel appeared to them, and comforted them with the words: 'Be without fear, for the good workman, who has well commenced his task and finishes it as well, shall have his reward!' Then the governor had them thrown into a burning furnace; but the fire was quenched forthwith, and they emerged unharmed. And the governor said to them: 'Have done now with your sorceries, and adore our gods!' But they answered: 'Finish what thou hast begun, for already the gates of Heaven stand open for us!' The governor therefore commanded that their heads be cut off. And when the headsman drew near, they fell to their knees and prayed as follows: 'O God, Who hast delivered us from the powers of darkness and hast led us toward the light, receive our souls into eternal life!' Whereupon their heads were severed, and they departed to Heaven.

Next the governor summoned Saint Blaise anew, and said to him: 'For the last time, wilt thou or wilt thou not adore the gods?' And Blaise responded: 'Blasphemer, I fear not thy threats! Here is my body, do with it as thou seest fit!' The governor gave the order to cast him into the pond. But Saint Blaise made the sign of the cross over the waters of the pond, and at once they became as firm as the dry earth. And the saint said: 'If your gods are true gods, give proof of their power by walking upon this water!' And sixty-five men walked into the water and were drowned. An angel then came down to Saint Blaise and said to him: 'Blaise, come out of the pond, and go to receive the crown which God has prepared

for thee!’ And when he came out of the water, the governor said to him: ‘Dost thou still refuse to adore the gods?’ To which Blaise answered: ‘Know, wretch, that I am a servant of Christ, and cannot adore demons!’ The governor sentenced him to be beheaded. And the saint, before offering his neck to the headsman, prayed to God that all who should be suffering from a malady of the throat, and should implore his aid, might be heard and healed. And a voice from Heaven said to him that his prayer was granted. Then the saint was beheaded, and the two children with him. This martyrdom took place about the year of the Lord 287.

## SAINT AGATHA

FEBRUARY 5

Agatha comes from *agios*, saintly, and *theos*, god, and means the saint of God. But there are three things, as Chrysostom says, which make a saint, and they were all perfected in her: purity of heart, the presence of the Holy Spirit, and a superabundance of good works. Or Agatha comes from *a*, without, and *geos*, earth, and *theos*, god: a goddess without the earth, that is, without love for earthly things. Or it comes from *aga*, speaking, and *thau*, accomplished: one who speaks with accomplishment and perfection; which we see from the replies which she made. Or it comes from *agat*, slavery, and *thao*, above: slavery on high. She is called thus for she said: ‘The highest freedom is the slavery of God.’ Or it comes from *aga*, solemnly, and *thau*, accomplished: solemnly accomplished, that is, interred, for the angels buried her.

The virgin Agatha came of a noble family, and was endowed with great beauty. She lived in Catania, where from early childhood she gave herself devoutly to the service of the Lord. But Quintianus the consul of Sicily, a man of base lineage and evil life, a miser and idolator, coveted her for his wife. Being lowly of birth, he thought that marriage to a maiden of noble degree would win him respect; being depraved of life, he longed to enjoy Agatha’s beauty; being greedy, he craved her wealth; and being an idolator, he hoped to persuade her to worship the gods. But when the maiden, in answer to his advances, remained unshakable in her

faith and her chastity, he handed her over to a procuress named Aphrodisia and her nine daughters, who lived in sin; and he commanded these creatures to try for thirty days to bring about a change of mind in Agatha. These women put all their guile to the task of drawing Agatha away from the path of virtue, at times holding out to her the promise of pleasure, again threatening her with cruel tortures. But Agatha said to them: 'My soul rests on the solid rock, and its foundations are in Christ; and your words are but air, your promises are as rain, and the tortures with which you threaten me are but waves breaking on the shore. In vain do all these things beat upon my house, for the house is staunch, and will not fall.' But even while she spoke thus, she wept day and night, and besought Heaven for the palm of martyrdom. And seeing that it was impossible to move her, Aphrodisia said to the consul: 'It were easier to soften stone, or to turn iron into lead, than to turn this girl's soul away from Christ!'

Then Quintianus had Agatha brought before him, and said to her: 'What is thy rank?' And she answered: 'Not only am I of noble blood, but also of illustrious family, as my whole house can bear witness!' And Quintianus rejoined: 'If thou art noble, why followest thou a way of life fit only for slaves?' And she replied: 'Because I am the slave of Christ!' Said Quintianus: 'If thou art noble, how canst thou at the same time call thyself a slave?' 'The slavery of Christ is the highest nobility,' she said. Then the consul commanded her to offer sacrifice to the gods, or, if she refused, to make ready for the most dreadful punishments. And Agatha said to him: 'May thy wife be like to thy goddess Venus, and mayest thou thyself be like to thy god Jupiter!' Quintianus ordered her struck in the face, and said: 'Take it not upon thyself to insult thy judge!' But Agatha replied: 'I wonder that thou, a man of reason, art fool enough to give the name of gods to these beings, to whom thou wilt not that thou and thy wife be likened. For thou sayest that I have insulted thee by wishing that thou be like to Jupiter. But if thy gods are good, I have wished thee naught but good; and if, on the contrary, thou blamest their shameful love, thou hast only to become a Christian, as I am a Christian!' 'Enough of talk!' cried the consul. 'Offer sacrifice to the gods, or thou shalt die amid the direst torments!' Agatha replied: 'If thou loosest wild beasts upon me, they will become tame when they hear the name of Christ;

if thou threatenest me with fire, the angels will assist me with heavenly dew; if thou wilt have me beaten and wilt torture me otherwise, the power of the Holy Ghost will suffer me to bear it as naught.' But she defied his threats, and taunted him before all; so he had her taken away to prison. Thither she went joyously and triumphantly, as though to a banquet.

On the morrow, the consul said to her: 'Renounce Christ and adore the gods!' Upon her refusal, he had her bound to a rack to be tortured. And Agatha said: 'In the midst of these sufferings, I feel in me the joy that a man knows when he receives good tidings, or sees a friend whom he has long desired to see, or comes into a great fortune! For just as the wheat cannot come into the granary before it has been thoroughly threshed and separated from the chaff, so my soul cannot enter into Paradise with the martyr's palm if thou dost not have my body threshed severely by the executioners.' Enraged, the consul ordered that her breasts be roughly twisted, and then commanded that they be torn off. And Agatha cried: 'Cruel and impious tyrant, does it not shame thee to torture, in a woman, that with which thy mother suckled thee? But know that in my soul I have other breasts, whose milk sustains all of my senses, which I have long since dedicated to God!' Thereupon the consul had her led back to prison, with the order that no physician was to care for her, and that no one was to give her food or drink. But at midnight an aged man entered the gaol, preceded by a child carrying a torch. And the old man said to her: 'Much suffering has this madman of a consul inflicted upon thee; but thou hast caused him even more by thine answers. I was present at the scene of thy torture, and I have seen that the wounds of thy breasts could be healed.' And Agatha replied: 'I have never made use of material remedies for my body; and 'twould be shame to lose now what I have heretofore preserved so carefully!' And the aged man said to her: 'My daughter, thy modesty need not be disturbed by me, for I too am a Christian!' To which Agatha made answer: 'In good sooth, my modesty could not take alarm, for in the first place thou art an old man, and in the second, my body is so disfigured that it could not awaken desire in anyone! But I thank thee, venerable father, for thy kind concern for me!' 'Why then,' asked the old man, 'wilt thou not allow me to heal thee?' Agatha replied: 'Because Jesus Christ is my Master; and if He sees fit, He can cure

me in a trice, with a single word!' Then the old man smiled, and said to her: 'My daughter, I am the apostle of Jesus, and He it was Who sent me to announce to thee in His name that thou art made whole!' Whereupon Saint Peter disappeared, leaving behind him a light so dazzling that all the prison guards fled in terror. And Saint Agatha was indeed entirely cured, and her two breasts restored by a miracle. And as the doors of the gaol stood open, there were some who besought her to flee. But she responded: 'God forbid that by taking flight I should lose the crown which is stored up for me, or that by my act I should expose the guards to punishment!'

Four days later the consul again had her brought before him, and ordered her to adore the gods. Agatha said: 'Thy words are but vain and senseless! Thinkest thou, fool, that I would adore figures of stone, and deny the God of Heaven Who healed me?' 'Who has healed thee?' asked the consul: 'Christ, the Son of God!' Agatha answered. 'Hast thou the audacity to pronounce again this name, which I detest?' cried Quintianus. 'As long as I have life,' said Agatha, 'the name of Christ will be in my heart and on my lips!' And Quintianus replied: 'Then we shall see whether thy Christ will cure thee another time!' He then commanded his men to scatter potsherds on the ground, to mix burning coals with them, and to drag the maiden, stripped of all vesture, over this fearsome bed. But while she was enduring this torture, a great earthquake shook the whole city, overthrew the palace, and crushed two counselors of Quintianus. And all the people rushed toward the consul, and reviled him for bringing this disaster upon them by his unjust treatment of Agatha. Then Quintianus, fearful both of the earthquake and of the revolt of the populace, remanded Agatha to prison; and there she began to pray, and said: 'Lord Jesus, Who hast created me and preserved me from my infancy, Who hast shielded my body from stain and my soul from the love of the world, Who hast enabled me to triumph over all my sufferings, receive my soul now, in Thy mercy!' And when she had prayed in a very loud voice, she breathed forth her soul. All this took place about the year of the Lord 253, in the reign of the Emperor Decius.

The faithful anointed the saint's body with spices and placed it in a sarcophagus. And behold a young man clothed in a silken garment, and accompanied by a hundred other youths in white tunics, drew near the tomb, placed over it a marble tablet, and forth-



with disappeared with his companions. And on the tablet was inscribed: 'Saintly and generous soul, an honour to God and the saviour of her country.' This meant that Agatha was a holy soul, offered herself generously to the pains of martyrdom, gave honour to God, and accomplished the deliverance of her native land. And as a result of the miraculous gift of this tablet, even the pagans and the Jews began to venerate the saint's tomb.

As for Quintianus, he was on his way to Saint Agatha's house, in the hope of finding hidden treasure, when all at once the two horses which drew his chariot began to gnash their teeth and to run away. And one of them bit him, and the other tossed him into the river with a blow of his hoof; and his body was never recovered.

One year after the death of Saint Agatha, a mountain which stood near Catania split open, and a torrent of fire poured out from it, leaping from rock to rock and consuming everything in its path, and threatening to flow over the city itself. Then the multitude of the pagans ran to the saint's tomb, tore off the veil which covered it, and spread it at the foot of the mountain: and this veil halted the river of fire, and saved the city. This miracle occurred the very day of the anniversary of Agatha's birth.

In his *Preface*, Ambrose says of her: 'Saintly and esteemed virgin who wert permitted to shed thy blood for the glory of Christ, thou art twice adorned, for in thy suffering there occurred all miracles, and the apostle of the Lord came and cured thee. And therefore, bride of Christ, thou wert taken up into Heaven; thy mortal remains were accorded all honour, the angelic choir praises the saintliness of thy soul and the salvation of thy country.'

## SAINT VAAST

FEBRUARY 6

Vaast comes from the Latin, Vedastus, and is the same as *vere dans æstus*, he who truly supplies warmth; for he made warmth by his penitence and atonement. Or it comes from *væb distans*, distant woe, because eternal woe is distant from him. For the damned shall cry 'Woe!' without ceasing: 'Woe, that I have displeased God; woe, that I followed the Devil; woe, that I cannot die; woe,

that I must endure such great suffering; woe, that I can never rid myself of it.'

Vaast was consecrated by Saint Remy as bishop of Arras. When he arrived at the gates of the city, he came upon two beggars, one halt and the other blind, who asked an alms of him. And he said to them: 'Gold and silver have I none, but what I have, I give you!' And he prayed over them, and they were made whole.

A wolf had made his lair in a deserted church, covered with weeds and brambles. Saint Vaast commanded him to be off, and to come back no more: and the wolf obeyed.

In the fortieth year of his episcopate, after he had converted a great number of pagans by his words and his example, Saint Vaast saw a column of fire coming down from Heaven and hovering over his house. He understood that his end was near: and a little time later, he fell asleep in the Lord, about the year 550.

And while he was being buried, the aged Audomatus, who was blind, grieved inconsolably because he could not look upon the remains of the holy bishop. And suddenly his sight was restored. Then, when he had seen the saint's body, he prayed to become blind again, and his prayer was granted.

## SAINT AMANDUS

FEBRUARY 6

Amandus received his name from the fact that he was worthy of all love. For, in him, were the three things that made a man worthy of love. First, true friendship, of which it is said in the book of Proverbs: 'A man amiable in society, shall be more friendly than a brother.' Second, honourable conduct; for it was said of Esther: 'And her incredible beauty made her appear agreeable and amiable in the eyes of all.' Third, righteousness and virtue, for it is said: 'Saul and Jonathan, lovely, and comely in their life.'

Born of noble parents, Amandus became a monk in his early youth. Walking one day in the monastery, he saw a serpent. He offered a prayer to God, and the serpent crawled back into his hole, and came out no more. Some time later, Amandus betook him-

self to the tomb of Saint Martin, and stayed there fifteen years, clothed in a hair-shirt, and subsisting on barley-bread and water.

Going to Rome, he passed a whole night in prayer in the church of Saint Peter, but the sexton roughly drove him away. Then the saint fell asleep before the door of the church; and Saint Peter appeared to him, and ordered him to go into Gaul, and to humble King Dagobert for his crimes. But the king resented his coming, and commanded him at once to leave his kingdom.

Meanwhile Dagobert was sore aggrieved that he was without children: and at last, in answer to his prayers, a son was born to him, and he thought to have the child baptized by Saint Amandus. He therefore sought out the whereabouts of the saint, pleaded for his pardon, and asked him to baptize the son whom the Lord had bestowed upon him. Amandus gladly yielded to the first of these requests, but refused the second, not wishing to take part in the affairs of the world. In the end, however, he acquiesced to the king's pleadings; and at the moment when he baptized the child, it responded aloud: 'Amen!' While all the others had remained silent. Dagobert then elevated him to the bishopric of Masstricht. But when Amandus saw that the people paid little heed to his preaching, he went off to Gascony. There a strolling player who made sport of the saint's words fell into the possession of the Devil, and tore his flesh with his own teeth, avowing that he had done injury to a man of God.

A certain bishop kept the water in which Saint Amandus had washed his hands; and later on, this water restored sight to a blind man.

Another time the saint, with the king's approbation, was about to build a monastery in a certain place, and the bishop of a nearby city, who was displeased with the plan, sent his servitors to drive Amandus away, or even to put him to death. These men accosted the saint, and tried to deceive him by saying that they would bring him to another place, better fitted for the building. The saint saw through their ruse; but thirsting for martyrdom, he followed them to the top of a mountain where they intended to kill him. But of a sudden the mountain was covered with rain and fog so dense that the bishop's henchmen could not see each other. They were seized with fear that they were about to die, and threw themselves at the

saint's feet, beseeching him to intercede with God to allow them to depart safely. And at the prayer of Amandus fair weather returned, and the bishop's men hied themselves to their homes.

And Saint Amandus worked many other miracles before he departed this life in the peace of the Lord. Amandus flourished about the year 653, in the reign of Heraclius.

## SAINT APOLLONIA

FEBRUARY 9

Under the Emperor Decius, a great persecution raged in Alexandria against the servants of God. Anticipating the edicts of the emperor, a wretch named Divinus stirred up a superstitious mob against the Christians; and the rabble, urged on by him, thirsted after the blood of the faithful. First they laid hands on a number of saintly persons, both men and women, of whom some were torn limb from limb, others had their eyes put out and their faces disfigured, and were then chased from the city, and still others, who had been led before the idols, and, far from adoring them, had hurled invectives at them, were dragged through the streets of the town with their feet bound with chains, until their bodies fell apart piece-meal.

Now there was in Alexandria a venerable virgin named Apollonia, already far advanced in years, and renowned for her chastity, her purity, her piety, and her charity. And when the maddened crowd had broken into the house of the servants of God, Apollonia was led before the tribunal of the impious. Falling upon her savagely, her persecutors began by tearing out all her teeth; then they lit a huge fire, and threatened to throw her into it alive, if she refused to join in their blasphemies. But when she saw the mounting flames, she first paused a moment, praying within herself; and then, slipping from the grasp of her persecutors, she cast herself into the fire, striking terror even into the cruel hearts of her tormentors. Already tried by so many tortures, she was not to be conquered either by pain or by the ardour of the flames, which was mild in comparison with the fire set alight in her by the rays of divine truth.

## SAINT VALENTINE

FEBRUARY 14

Valentine comes from *valorem tenens*, one who perseveres in holiness. Or it comes from *valens tiro*, a strong warrior, one who fights for Christ. But a warrior is strong only when he remains unconquered, bravely attacks, defends himself valiantly, and carries off victory. And so Valentine was never conquered, for he never fled martyrdom; he attacked the idols in exterminating them; he defended the faith in that he strengthened it; he carried off victory in that he suffered.

Valentine was a priest whose holiness was known to all. The Emperor Claudius summoned him and said to him: 'Valentine, why dost thou not earn our good will by adoring our gods and putting away thy vain superstitions?' Valentine answered: 'Didst thou but know the grace of God, thou wouldst not say these things; and thou thyself wouldst turn away from these idols, and wouldst adore the God of Heaven!' Then one of the emperor's retainers said to Valentine: 'Dost thou dare to disparage the sanctity of our gods?' And Valentine replied: 'Your gods are but the wretched fabrications of men, and are sodden with uncleanness!' Claudius then said: 'If thy Christ is the true God, tell me the truth!' And Valentine made answer: 'The truth is this: that Christ is the only God, and that if thou believest in Him thy soul shall be saved, thy power increased, thine enemies put to rout!' Claudius, turning to those around him, said: 'Romans, do you hear how well and wisely this man speaks?' But the prefect protested: 'The emperor is being deluded! Must we therefore renounce what we have believed since we were children?' These words hardened the heart of Claudius, and he committed Valentine to a prince of his court, to be guarded as a prisoner in his house. When he had come into the prince's house, Valentine cried out: 'Lord Jesus, Thou Who art the one and only Light, shed Thy light upon this house, that those who dwell herein may know Thee for the true God!' Whereupon the prince said to him: 'Since thou proclaimest that thy Christ is Light, ask Him to restore sight to my daughter who is blind! And if He does this, I shall do all that thou biddest.' Valentine prayed, from that

hour the blind girl saw, and the whole household was converted.

But the emperor was not deterred, and ordered him beheaded. His martyrdom took place in the year of the Lord 280.

## SAINT JULIANA

FEBRUARY 16

Juliana was betrothed to Eulogius, the prefect of Nicomedia; but she refused to come to his bed until he had embraced the Christian faith. Then her father, filled with rage at her disobedience, had her stripped of her clothing and showered with blows, after which he handed her over to the prefect. And Eulogius said to her: 'My sweet Juliana, why hast thou beguiled me with thy promises of love, only to refuse my hand this day?' She answered: 'If thou consentest to adore my God, I shall be thine; else thou shalt never be my master!' 'I cannot do what thou askest,' returned the prefect, 'for the emperor would have my head!' 'If thou art in such fear of a mortal emperor,' Juliana replied, 'how much greater must be my fear of my Emperor, who is eternal! Do with me as thou wilt, I shall never yield to thee!' Thereupon the prefect had her beaten with rods, and then hung up by her hair for a half day, and ordered molten lead to be poured upon her head. But of all this she suffered no ill; so he clapped her into chains and put her in prison.

There a devil came to visit her, in the guise of an angel, and said to her: 'Juliana, I am an angel of the Lord, and my Master has sent me to bid thee offer sacrifice to the gods; for the Lord has taken pity upon thee, and is disposed to spare thee a cruel agony and a frightful death!' Then Juliana burst into tears, and cried: 'My Lord Jesus, save me from the peril of my soul, and make known to me who it is that gives me such counsel!' And a voice from on high told her to lay hold on the visitor, and to force him to confess who he was. Juliana therefore seized the false angel, and demanded that he tell her who he was; and he answered that he was a demon, and that his father had sent him to lead her astray. Juliana asked who his father was, and the demon replied: 'He is Beelzebub, who compels us to do evil, and beats us cruelly whenever the Christians have the best of us. So shall I pay dearly for this day, since I have

failed to conquer thee!’ And among other things, he told her that the devils suffer above all while the Christians are attending Mass, or are engaged in prayer and preaching. Then Juliana bound his hands behind his back, threw him to the ground, and beat him soundly with the chains with which she was bound; and the devil besought her with loud cries, saying: ‘Good Juliana, have mercy on me!’

Meanwhile the prefect had given orders to take her out of prison, and she came forth dragging the demon behind her, bound as before. And the demon implored her, saying: ‘Lady Juliana, do not any longer make a laughing-stock of me, or never again shall I be able to have power over a Christian! Christians are said to be merciful, and yet thou hast not the least pity for me!’ But the saint nonetheless dragged him from one end of the market-place to the other, and then threw him into a privy.

The prefect had Juliana stretched on a wheel, and her bones were shattered until the marrow spurted out: but an angel destroyed the wheel and healed the saint. Seeing this, all those who stood by believed in Christ, and forthwith suffered martyrdom. Five hundred men and one hundred and thirty women were beheaded. The prefect then caused the saint to be plunged into a cauldron of molten lead; but the lead suddenly cooled, and became as a lukewarm bath. Thereupon the prefect cursed his gods, because they were powerless to punish a frail woman who had heaped so many insults upon them. He then ordered her beheaded. And as she was on her way to the scaffold, the demon whom she had beaten reappeared, this time in the guise of a young man; and he shouted to the executioners: ‘Spare not that hussy of a woman! She has spoken the worst things of your gods, and thrashed me roundly last night! Do to her as she deserves!’ But Juliana, who had her eyes closed, half opened them to peer at the one who was saying these things; and the demon took to his heels, crying: ‘Woe is me, she is about to seize me and bind me again!’ But the saint went bravely to her death.

Some days later, in the course of a sea voyage, the prefect perished in a storm with thirty-four men. Their bodies were vomited up by the sea on to the shore, and devoured by the beasts and birds of prey.

## THE CHAIR OF SAINT PETER AT ANTIOCH

FEBRUARY 22

A chair may be of three kinds. The first is the chair of regal dignity, of which it is said in the II Book of Kings: 'Jesbaham sitting in the chair.' The second is the chair of presbyterial dignity, of which it is said in the I Book of Kings: 'And Heli the priest sitting upon a stool.' The third is the chair of the teacher, of which Saint Matthew says: 'The scribes and the Pharisees have sitten on the chair of Moses.'

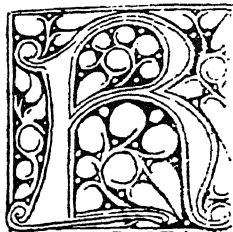
Saint Peter possessed all of these; the first, for he was the lord of all of the kings of the earth; the second, for he was the shepherd of all the priests; the third, for he was the teacher of all Christendom.

On this day the Church honours the Chair of Saint Peter, because it was on this day that Peter seated himself for the first time upon the pontifical throne at Antioch. There were four reasons for the institution of this feast.

In the first place, when Saint Peter was preaching at Antioch, the prefect Theophilus said to him: 'Peter, wherefore dost thou corrupt my people?' And as Peter continued to preach the Christian faith, the prefect had him bound with chains and cast into gaol, where he was left without food or drink. But Peter, his strength already waning, recovered sufficiently to raise his eyes to Heaven and to say: 'Jesus Christ, help of the unfortunate, come to my aid in these trials!' And Our Lord answered: 'Didst thou then think that I had abandoned thee? Thou dost an injustice to My mercy in saying such a thing. Soon will come one who will succour thy distress!' And indeed, Saint Paul, when he heard that Peter was in prison, came to Theophilus, and presented himself as a skilled artist, able to carve in wood and marble, and to paint upon canvas. Theophilus urged him to abide at his own court. A few days later, Paul secretly made his way into Peter's cell. Seeing his fellow apostle near death from exhaustion, Paul wept bitterly; and throwing his arms about him, he said: 'O Peter, my brother, my glory, my joy, other half of my soul, come back to thyself!' Then Peter opened his eyes and recognized Paul, but was unable to speak. Paul opened his mouth and forced in a little food, and Peter presently recovered



Cum aut non haberet unde sepulturā facē ecce duo leones ad uenerunt & foueā pauerunt sepultoq; eo ad siluā redierunt. Anthoni? aut tunicā pauli ex palmis & textū assumpsit qua p̄modū i solēnitatib; utebat̄ obiit aut circa ānos. cc. lxxxvij. De sancto remigio.



**R**emigius dicit̄ a remi qđ est pascens & geos qđ est terra quasi pascēs terrenos doctrina. Vt remigius dē a remi qđ est pastor & gyon qđ est luctacō q̄si pastor et luctator. p̄uit enim gregē suū verbo predicacōis exēplo p̄dicacōis suffragio oracōnis. Est etiā triplex genus armorū defensionis vt scūtū pugnacōis vt gladius municōis vt lorica siue galea. Luctatus est igitur cōtra dyabolum scuto fidei gladio verbi dei & galea spei. Eius vitā; Remen? ignarus archiepiscopus scripsit.



**R**emigius doctōr egregius et p̄fessor dñi gl̄oriosus a q̄o; hēmita nasci taliter est peruersus Cū enī viandaloz; p̄secutio totā fr̄ciā deuastasset quidam reclusus vir fact̄ q̄ lumen oculoz; amisserat p̄ pace ecclesie gallicane crebr̄ oracōib; dñm exorabat Et ecce angelus dñi in visu ei astitit ei; dixit. scito q; mulier

illa noīe cilina filiū noīe remigiū gñabit q̄ gentē suā a maloz; incurfio liberauit. Cūq; euigilasset statim ad domum ciline venit & qđ viderat enarrauit. Cūq; illa non credet̄ eo q; ān? iaz esset. Ille r̄ndit scias q; cū p̄m ablactauis oculos meos de lacte tuo punget & ḡtinuo mihi visū restituet. Cūq; p̄ ordinē hec oīa ḡtigissent. Remigi? m̄dm fugit & reclusū inuit. Cre/ scēte aut ei? fama cū esset. xx. duoz; annoz; ab oī p̄plo remen? archiepiscopus est elect̄. tante aut ḡsuetudis fuit q; etiā ad mensaz; ei? passerēs veniebant & de manu ei? reliq̄as ciboz; ḡmedebāt



some degree of strength, and falling into each other's arms, they wept together. Then Paul betook himself to Theophilus, and said to him: 'O Theophilus, thou art a kindly and hospitable man! Remember that small ill can wipe out great good! What hast thou done with the servant of God called Peter? Poor and weak, he made his living by his words: and thou hast not thought better than to put such a man in prison! And moreover, hadst thou left him at liberty, he could have served thee well; for it is said that he cures the sick and raises the dead!' To all this Theophilus replied: 'These are but idle tales, my dear Paul; for if this man could raise the dead, he could surely rescue himself from his prison!' Paul answered: 'But I have been told that just as Christ, Who later rose from the dead, did not choose to come down from the Cross, so also this Peter, following the example of his Master, refuses to make his escape, choosing rather to suffer for Christ!' Then said Theophilus: 'Very well then! Go and tell him that I shall set him free if he restores my son to life, that has been dead these fourteen years!' Paul bore this message to Peter, who said to him: 'This is indeed a great miracle that is demanded of me: but the power of God shall accomplish it through me!' He was then led to the tomb of Theophilus' son, ordered the door opened, and called the dead youth to life.

But we must admit that this miracle seems very unlikely to us, not only because of the fourteen years which God is supposed to have allowed the dead man to spend in the tomb, but also because of the ruse and the falsehood which the story attributes to Saint Paul.

But however that may be, it is true that Theophilus and the entire populace of Antioch were finally converted to the Lord, and erected a magnificent church, in the middle of which they raised a high throne for Peter, whence he could be seen and heard by all. He held this see for seven years before going on to Rome, where he occupied the Chair of Rome for twenty-five years. In memory of this event, therefore, the Church celebrates this feast, because on this day, for the first time, the head of the Church was lifted up in name and in power. And it came to pass as it was written in the Psalms: 'And let them exalt him in the church of the people: and praise him in the chair of the ancients.'

It is well known that this feast is the third of those in which the Church pays honour to the glorious successor of Christ. And certes

Saint Peter deserved to have three feasts, because he was raised above the other apostles in three ways: in authority, in the love of Christ, and in the power to work miracles. Moreover, Saint Peter was the ruler of the whole Church, which extends over the three parts of the world, Asia, Africa, and Europe: whence the three feasts by which the Church honours him. Finally Peter, through his power to bind and to loose, delivers us from three sorts of sins, the sins of thought, of word, and of deed, and likewise from those which we commit against God, against our neighbour, and against ourselves.

The second reason for the institution of this feast is set down in the *Itinerary* of Clement. As Saint Peter drew near to Antioch, the inhabitants came out to meet him clothed only in hair-shirts, barefoot, and their heads covered with ashes; and this was as a sign of their repentance, because they had given credence to the falsehoods of Simon Magus. And Peter, gladdened by their penitence, caused to be brought before him all those who were sick or possessed of the Devil; and as soon as he had invoked the name of God upon them, a great light shone forth, and all were made whole, and they ran after him kissing the places where his feet had trod. Within the week following, more than ten thousand men were baptized. Seeing these things, the prefect Theophilus made over his palace into a basilica, and there placed an elevated throne for Peter, whereon all could see and hear him. — This story does not necessarily contradict the preceding one: it could easily have happened that Peter was imprisoned by Theophilus and set free through Saint Paul's good offices, and that later on, during one of his journeys, the people of Antioch allowed themselves to be ensnared by the trumperies of Simon the Magician, and in the end repented of their error.

Thirdly, this feast, which is also called the Banquet of Saint Peter, owes its establishment to an ancient custom which the Church transformed into a Christian feast. Master John Beleth tells us that among the pagans it was customary, on a certain day in the month of February, to lay out a repast upon the tombs of the dead. The pagans believed that this repast was consumed by the souls of their departed, whereas in reality the demons themselves feasted upon it. The pagans called these souls shadows. For according to the custom of the ancients, the souls that still dwelt in their bodies were called souls; if they went down to hell they were called manes;

if they went up to Heaven they were called spirits; but if they had but recently died and were still haunting their tombs, they were called shadows. It is quite possible that this ancient custom had not been done away with among the Christians. This the holy fathers saw, and in its place they set the Feast of the Chair of Saint Peter in Rome and in Antioch. And it so happens that to this day there are still some who speak of the Banquet of Saint Peter because it falls on the same day as the ancient banquet of the dead.

Finally, this feast is intended to mark the institution of the tonsure for priests. For, while Saint Peter was preaching at Antioch, his head was shaven as a mark of infamy; and thenceforth this mark was adopted by the clergy as a badge of honour. As a symbol, the tonsure stands for the preservation of purity of life, the abandonment of outward ornament, and the renunciation of this world's goods. And since the circle is the perfect figure, the round shape of the tonsure signifies that priests must give to the world an example of Christian perfection.

## SAINT MATTHIAS

FEBRUARY 24

Matthias is a Hebrew name and means he who is given by God, or the gift of God. Or, it means the small one, the lowly one. He was given by God; for the Lord selected him from the world, and designated him among his seventy-two disciples. He was a gift of God, for, chosen by lot, he was counted among the apostles. He was small and lowly for he constantly lived in true lowliness. But, as Ambrose tells us, there are three kinds of lowliness: the first is that of affliction which comes from without, when one is made lowly; the second is that of contemplation and comes from within, when one contemplates himself; the third is that of piety and comes from the acknowledgement of God. Matthias had the first when he suffered martyrdom, the second for he despised himself, the third for he adored the power of God. Or, Matthias comes from *manu*, the good, and *thesis*, placing: the good that is placed instead of the evil, for Matthias was placed in the stead of Judas.

The life of Saint Matthias, in the version which is read in the churches, is believed to have been written by the Venerable Bede.

Matthias was called to take the place left vacant among the apostles by the miserable end of Judas. And we may take this occasion to sum up what is known of the origin and youth of Judas himself. A certain history, which unfortunately is apocryphal and little worthy of credence, gives us the details which follow.

There was in Jerusalem a man called Ruben, or by his other name of Simon, of the tribe of Dan (or, according to Saint Jerome, of the tribe of Issachar), who had as his wife a woman named Ciborea. One night, when they had lain down with each other, Ciborea fell asleep and had a dream, from which she awoke moaning and weeping with fright. And she said to her husband: 'I dreamt that I was bearing a son so evil that he would be the downfall of our race!' And Ruben answered: 'Thou sayest a wicked thing, not worthy to be spoken or thought. The devil himself, no doubt, has set thee raving!' But she replied: 'If I conceive a son of our union this night, it will be proof that my dream was no devilish illusion, but a revelation of the truth!' And when, nine months from that night, she bore a son, both she and her husband were sore afraid, and knew not what to do; for they were horrified at the thought of putting their own flesh and blood to death, and on the other hand could not bear to nurture the future destroyer of their people. They determined ultimately to place the infant in a little basket, and to leave him to the mercy of the waves of the sea. Thus he was borne to the shores of an island called Iscariot, whence is supposed to come the name of Judas Iscariot, by which the ill-fated apostle is known. And the queen of this island, walking on the strand, discovered the basket, had it taken from the water, saw the infant therein, and exclaimed: 'Oh, how happy I would be to have a child like this one, so that when I died, I should not leave an empty throne!' Thus she had the babe cared for in secret, and pretended to be with child; and in time she presented the child as her son, and the whole kingdom hailed the event joyously. The king, delighted to be a father, reared the boy in all the state that befitted his rank. But after a short time, the queen did really conceive of her husband, and brought forth a son. The two children were fostered together: but Judas, when at play, oftentimes beat and insulted the royal child, and made him weep. At this the queen, knowing that he was not her son,

many times had him beaten in his turn: but nothing availed to mend the ways of the wayward youth. At last, however, the truth came out, and it was known that Judas was not the true son of the king. Thereupon Judas, burning with shame and jealousy, secretly slew the king's true heir, his supposed brother. Then, fearing the penalty of his deed, he took flight with his cronies and went to Jerusalem; and there the prefect Pilate, recognizing in him a boon companion, conceived a warm affection for him — so true is it that birds of a feather flock together.

Thus Judas came to occupy a place of honour in Pilate's court. And one day Pilate was looking out upon an ample orchard close by his palace, and began to long for a taste of the fruit. As it happened, the orchard belonged to Ruben, the father of Judas; but neither of them recognized the other. And Judas, aware of Pilate's desire, entered the orchard and started to pick apples. And when Ruben found him out, they began by vilifying each other, and then came to blows: and Judas finally killed Ruben, striking him with a stone at the back of the head. Thereafter he brought the apples to Pilate, and told him all that had happened. And when Ruben's death became known, Pilate bestowed all the dead man's goods upon his favourite, Judas, and gave him the widow in wedlock, she being none other than his mother, Ciborea.

One evening Ciborea was sighing so mournfully, that Judas, her new spouse, asked her what had befallen her. She replied: 'Alas, I am the most unhappy of women! I was forced to drown my only son, my husband was murdered, and now, to crown my misery, Pilate has compelled me to remarry maugre my grief!' Then she told him the whole story of the child, and Judas recounted his adventures to her. Thus they discovered that Judas had killed his father and married his mother. Then, at Ciborea's behest, the wretched man resolved to do penance, and sought out Our Lord Jesus Christ, of Whom he implored pardon for his sins. — This is what we read in the apocryphal account. Should we put faith in this strange story? Let the reader decide: but I, for one, deem it more worthy of being rejected.

This much, however, is certain, that Our Lord made Judas His disciple, and chose him among his twelve apostles. And Judas drew so close to Him that he became the Master's purse-bearer. He it was who carried the alms which were given to Jesus; and doubt-

lessly he had no qualms about stealing them. Shortly before the Passion of Our Lord, Judas was angered that an ointment which was bestowed upon Jesus was not sold for three hundred pence; probably he had planned to take this sum for himself. He went therefore to the Jews, and betrayed Christ to them for thirty pieces of silver. Of this fact two interpretations are given. One is that the pieces of silver which Judas received were each of them worth ten pence, and thus made up the sum which he would have had of the sale of the ointment. The other explanation is that Judas was accustomed to take the tenth part of all monies that were entrusted to his care; and thus the silver given to him by the Jews amounted to the profit which would have come to him had the ointment been sold. But as soon as he had received the thirty pieces of silver, he was overcome with shame; and he brought them back and cast them down in the Temple. Then he went and hanged himself from a tree, and burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. He did not vomit them from the mouth, because his mouth could not be defiled, having touched the glorious face of Christ. It was just that his entrails should burst forth, since it was out of them that his evil plan arose, and it was equally just that his throat, from which the betrayal issued, should be closed by the rope. And he died in mid-air, because he had given offense to the angels of Heaven and to the men on earth, and thus deserved to perish between earth and Heaven.

Some days after the Ascension of Our Lord, and before Pentecost, therefore, Peter, rising up in the midst of the brethren, said: 'Men, brethren, of these men who have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus came in and went out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, until the day wherein he was taken up from us, one of these must be made with us a witness of his resurrection.' Then they appointed two, of whom one was Joseph, called Barsabas, who was surnamed the Just because of his holiness, and the other was Matthias, whose praises the author of the Acts deemed it needless to recite, since his election to the apostolate was enough of praise. And praying, the apostles said: 'Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen, to take the place of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas hath by transgression fallen!' And they cast lots, and



the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was numbered with the twelve apostles.

In this regard Saint Jerome observes that the example of this choice does not prove that recourse should be had to the casting of lots for religious elections; for the privilege of the few is not the law of the many. As Bede says, indeed, the Host immolated in the Passion was consummated only at Pentecost. But the election of Matthias took place before Pentecost, and therefore lots were cast in accordance with the Old Law, which ordained that the High Priest be chosen by lot. But after Pentecost had put an end to the Old Law, it was not by lot that the seven deacons were selected, but by the choice of the disciples; and the Apostles ordained them by the laying on of hands. As to the nature of the lot cast, the holy fathers seemed to have two opinions about it. Jerome and Bede write that it was the customary kind used under the Old Covenant. But Dionysius, Saint Paul's disciple, held that to be irreligious, and believed that the lot was nothing other than a nimbus which came from Heaven and surrounded Matthias; through this it was apparent that he was to be chosen as one of the apostles. Of this he says in the book of the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, 'Of the lot that fell at God's command upon Matthias, some say this and others say that, but as it seems to me, not as a matter of faith; therefore I too will write what I think: it appears to me that the gospels call the gift of God that made known to the apostles which of their number had been selected in His judgement, a lot.'

Matthias' mission was to preach the Gospel in Judea, there he preached for many years, worked numerous miracles, and at last fell asleep in the peace of the Lord. Certain authors declare, however, that he suffered martyrdom, being put to death on the cross. His body is said to be buried beneath a slab of porphyry, in the church of Saint Mary Major at Rome; and there his head is shown to the faithful.

According to another legend, current at Trier, Saint Matthias was born in Bethlehem, of a noble family of the tribe of Juda. He learned all wisdom, and in a short time was well instructed in the Law and the Prophets. He did not follow worldly pleasures, and even in his youth he was rich in virtue. He schooled himself in virtue so that he might be wise in understanding, ready in compassion, not proud

in good fortune, and constant and undismayed in his fortune. He was ever on the alert to carry out in works that which he felt in his heart, and what his lips preached, his hands did as well. While preaching in Judea, he gave sight to the blind, cleansed the lepers, drove out demons, made the lame to walk, the deaf to hear, and the dead to rise. He was accused by the high priest of many things, to which he replied: 'I cannot answer much as to the offense of which you accuse me. It is not an offense to be a Christian, but the highest honour.' Said the high priest: 'Wilt thou make amends if I give thee a period of grace?' He replied: 'Be it far from me to turn aside from the truth, once I have found it.' And so Matthias was learned in the law, pure of heart, wise in spirit, keen in his interpretation of the Scriptures, thoughtful in his counsel, courageous in his preaching. Many were converted by him, and the Jews, jealous of these things, haled him before the judge. He was accused by two false witnesses, who afterwards stoned him; and he desired that the stones be buried with him, in testimony against them. And while they were stoning him, he was beheaded with an axe, in the Roman manner, and breathed forth his soul to God, his hands lifted up to Heaven. The same legend adds that his body was first brought from Judea to Rome, but now rests in a church at Trier.

Another legend says that Matthias went to Macedonia, and there, in the name of Christ, drank a cup of poison which had the property of destroying the sight of those who drank it. Yet not only did it do Matthias no harm; but, according to the legend, he restored their sight by the laying on of hands to more than two hundred and fifty persons who had been blinded by this same poison. But the Devil appeared to them in the form of a child and admonished them to kill Matthias, who was destroying their faith. And though he was in their midst, they sought him for three days, and yet they could not find him. On the third day, however, he made himself known to them and said: 'I am he whom ye seek.' Then they tied his hands behind his back, placed a rope around his neck, beat him, and threw him into prison. There the demons came to him and gnashed their teeth, but they could not approach him. Then the Lord appeared to him in the midst of a great light, lifted him up from the ground, loosened his bonds, strengthened him with sweetness, and opened the door to him. And he went forth and preached the word of God. But some there were who remained obstinate in their sins, and re-

sisted him; but he said: 'I say unto you, ye shall go to Hell alive.' Thereupon the earth opened up and swallowed them. But the others were all converted to the Lord.

## SAINT GREGORY

MARCH 12

Gregory comes from *grex*, flock, and *gore*, preaching or speaking. Therefore Gregory means preacher of the flock. Or, Gregory is the same as *egregorius* which comes from *egregius*, and *gore*, a praiseworthy teacher or preacher. Or, in our language, Gregory means the watchful one, for he was watchful to himself, to the Lord, and to the flock; to himself in preserving his purity, to God in his contemplative life, to the flock in his industrious preaching. By means of these three anyone may merit the sight of God. Of this Saint Augustine writes: 'He will see God who lives in virtue, occupies himself industriously, and prays piously.'

The life of Saint Gregory was first written by the historian Paul the Longobard, and later carefully revised by John the Deacon.

Gregory, the son of Gordian and Sylvia, came of a senatorial family. Although from his youth he scaled the highest summits of philosophy, and in addition was possessed of great wealth, he resolved to renounce his fortune and to consecrate himself to the service of God. But as he put off his conversion, thinking that he could serve God while remaining in the lay state and carrying out the functions of a judge, his love of earthly things grew so much that he was tempted to serve the world not only in act but in spirit. At last, after the death of his father, he founded six monasteries in Sicily, and a seventh at Rome, in his own house; and there he laid aside his silken raiment, adorned with gold and precious stones, and donned the humble habit of a monk. And in little time he attained to a state of perfection which he later described as follows, in one of his *Dialogues*: 'My poor soul, loaded down beneath the weight of its cares, loves to recall its olden happiness during my stay in the monastery. Then the course of passing things gave it no concern, used as it was to think only of the things of Heaven. And oftentimes it was rapt in contemplation out of the cloister of the flesh: and death itself,

which so often seems a painful thing, seemed to it to be the entering in to life, and the sweet reward of all pains.' And Gregory chastised his body with such extreme austerities that his stomach was paralyzed, and he often suffered those spells of lifelessness which the Greeks call *syncope*.

One day when he was busy writing in a cell of the monastery over which he ruled as abbot, an angel appeared to him in the guise of a shipwrecked sailor, and asked him for alms. Gregory gave him six pieces of silver; but some hours later the mariner returned, and said that he had lost much, and had received too little. Again Gregory gave him six pieces of silver; and once more the mendicant returned, begging alms more insistently than before. Then the steward of the monastery told Gregory that he had nothing more to give, save only a silver porringer in which Gregory's mother was wont to send cooked vegetables to her son. At once Gregory ordered him to give the porringer to the beggar, who accepted it with joy and disappeared. And this mendicant was an angel, who at a later time, as we shall see, revealed himself to Saint Gregory.

One day Saint Gregory, passing through the market place, saw a number of young slaves for sale, and they were most fair of face and form. He asked the slave merchant to tell him whence came these young men. The merchant replied that they came from Great Britain, and that all the people of that land had the same fair hair and the same comeliness of aspect. Gregory asked if they were Christians: and learning that they were pagans, he cried out: 'Alas! Must such fair faces as these still belong to the prince of darkness!' He inquired by what name this people was known, and was told that they were called the *Angles*. And the saint said: 'They are well named, these Angles, or rather these Angels, for they have the faces of Angels!' Then he betook himself to the sovereign pontiff, and persuaded him, by dint of his pleadings, to send him to Britain to convert the English. But hardly had he set out when the Romans, disturbed at his going, said to the pope: 'By sending Gregory away thou hast given offense to Saint Peter, and brought ruin upon Rome!' The pope, dismayed, ordered his people to hurry after Gregory and to bring him back. And Gregory, already three days on his journey, was reading in a certain place while his companions slept, when a grasshopper alighted near him, and drew his attention from his book, for he thought of its name, *locusta*, which means: 'Remain in this

place.' Gregory immediately exhorted his companions to leave him; and taking up his reading anew, he remained motionless until the pope's messengers came up, and constrained him to return with them. Thus he went back to Rome, all against his will; and the pope prevailed with him to leave his monastery, and named him his cardinal deacon.

The Tiber one time overflowed its banks, and swelled so enormously that it swept even over the walls of Rome, and felled many houses. Then, when the flood subsided, a swarm of serpents, a great dragon, and other monsters were borne down and left by the waters and their bodies began to rot and poisoned the air with their fetidness; and this produced a pestilence so deadly that men saw arrows falling from Heaven and killing the Romans. The first victim of the plague was Pope Pelagius; and thereafter it carried off so many people that many of the houses in Rome stood empty, their indwellers being dead. But since the Church of God could not be without a head, the entire populace chose Gregory to be pope, although he resisted this action with all his might. The day that he was to be consecrated, he preached to the people, led a great procession, recited the litanies, and exhorted the faithful to besiege God with more fervent prayer. And while the folk were gathered about him in prayer, the plague in less than an hour laid low eighty persons among the assistants: but Gregory continued to preach nonetheless, urging the people not to desist from prayer until the pestilence had vanished. And when the procession was ended, he sought to flee from Rome, lest he be consecrated pope; but he was unable to do so, because every gate was watched night and day to prevent him from escaping. Finally he won over certain traders, and they carried him out of the city in a tun; and he took refuge in a cave in the depths of the woods, and there remained hidden for three days. But the men who were sent to search for him saw a column of light coming down from Heaven upon the place where he lay hid; and a monk made out the forms of angels, mounting and descending in this column. Straightway Gregory was taken, and carried off to Rome by the whole populace; and there he was consecrated, and enthroned as sovereign pontiff.

That Saint Gregory was inducted into this great dignity much against his will is shown by his own words, in the letter which he sent to Narsus the Patrician. There he says: 'When ye write me

of the height of my contemplation, ye renew in me my sighs at my fall; then I hear what I have lost within me, for I have been raised to heights of power through no merit of my own. Know then that I am so downcast that I cannot speak of it. Therefore ye shall not call me *noemi*, which means lovely, but call me *mara*, which means bitter; for I am full of bitterness.' Another time he wrote: 'If ye love me, then weep with me when ye have heard that I have been made the highest bishop, for I too weep without ceasing; and pray to God for me.' In the preface to his *Dialogue*, he speaks thus: 'Due to my pastoral office my soul is troubled with the cares of worldly people, and after the holy peace of contemplation, it is stained with the dust of earthly deeds. For then I am aware of my suffering and that which I have lost. If I look upon that which I have lost, my burden becomes the heavier. See, I am tossed about upon a great sea, and the little ship of my spirit is pressed by the raging of the wind and the waves of the water; and when I think of my former life, I turn my eyes backward as if to the shore, and sigh when I behold it.'

The plague continued to rage, and the pope ordained that on Easter Day a procession should march around the city, bearing the picture of the Blessed Virgin which is in the possession of the church of Saint Mary Major. This picture, according to the common opinion, was painted by Saint Luke, who was as skilled in the art of painting as he was in medicine. And all at once the sacred image cleansed the air of infection, as if the pestilence could not withstand its presence; wherever it passed, the air became pure and refreshing. And it is told that the voices of angels were heard around the picture, singing:

*Regina cœli lætare, alleluja,  
quia quem meruisti portare, alleluja,  
resurrexit sicut dixit, alleluja!*

which means: 'Queen of Heaven, rejoice, alleluia! For He Whom thou wert worthy to bear, alleluia! hath risen as He said, alleluia!' To this Saint Gregory promptly responded: 'Ora pro nobis Deum rogamus, alleluja.' — 'Pray for us, we beg, alleluia!' Then, above the fortress of Crescentius, he saw a mighty angel wiping a bloody sword and putting it back into its sheath. From this he understood that the plague was at an end, as indeed it was. And

thenceforth this fortress was called the Fortress of the Holy Angel.

After this Saint Gregory fulfilled his old wish, and sent Augustine, Melitus, John, and several other priests to England. And by their work, as also by the pope's prayers and merits, the English were converted.

Such was Gregory's humility that he never allowed anyone to speak in praise of him. To the bishop Stephen, who lauded him in his letters, he replied: 'You load me down with praise in your letters, although it is written that a man should not be praised as long as he lives. Although I did not deserve to hear it, I beg of you that ye pray for me that all the good may come to me that ye have spoken and that is not yet in me.' Again he wrote to Narsus the Patrician: 'When, comparing names and things, ye speak great things of me, dear brother, then ye surely make a lion of a monkey. It is the same as if ye were to call a mangy little dog a leopard or a tiger.' In the same sense he wrote to Anastasius, the patriarch of Antioch: 'The eulogies which you address to me trouble me sorely. For I know myself as I am, and I am conscious that nothing of mine merits such praise; yet on the other hand, considering who you are, I cannot think that you could lie.' As for the flattering titles which were conferred upon him, he would have none of them. To Eulogius, the Patriarch of Alexandria, who had called him *Universal Pope*, he wrote: 'I beg Your Holiness no longer to address me by that title: for a title which lowers my brethren does no honour to me.' And when John, the Bishop of Constantinople, had wrung from the Synod by fraud the title of Universal Pope, Saint Gregory wrote concerning him: 'Who is this who dares, in defiance of the precepts of the Gospel and of the sacred canons, to trick himself out with a new title?' Nor would he permit the other bishops to look upon him as giving them orders; and he wrote to Eulogius: 'I pray you no more to speak of my *commands*, for I know who I am and who you are. In title you are my brothers, and in holiness you are my fathers.' In the excess of his humility, he could not bear to have women call themselves his servants. To the patrician Rusticana he wrote: 'One thing in your letter has vexed me, that several times you call yourself my servant. How can you say that you are the servant of a man who, by accepting the office of bishop, has become the servant of all?' He was the first to proclaim himself the 'servant of the servants of God'; and he ordained that his successors should take the

same title. Nor did he wish to publish his books during his lifetime; and in comparison with the works of others, he considered his own devoid of all merit. To Innocent, the prefect of Africa, he wrote: 'That you ask me to send you my Commentaries on the Book of Job, does honour to your intention. But if you wish to nourish your mind with a truly delectable aliment, you ought rather to read the works of your compatriot Saint Augustine. With this wheat at your disposal, you will have no desire for my bran.'

And in a book written in Greek and translated into Latin, we read that a holy abbot named John came to Rome to visit the tombs of the Apostles, and met Pope Gregory walking through the city. And Gregory, seeing that the abbot was about to kneel before him, forestalled him by falling to his knees, and would not rise before the abbot had done so.

Saint Gregory's charity was at the level of his humility. He was so charitable that he provided for the needs of the poor not only in Rome, but in distant places. He had a list made of all the needy, and came generously to the aid of all. He sent assistance to the monks of Mount Sinai, supported a monastery which he had founded at Jerusalem, and every year gave eighty livres of gold for the sustenance of three thousand handmaids of the Lord. Daily he welcomed to his table pilgrims and other strangers, whoever they might be.

On one occasion, just as he was about to pour water in a basin so that one of his guests might bathe his hands, the stranger disappeared, and no one knew where he was gone. And the following night Our Lord appeared to Saint Gregory and said to him: 'On other days thou receivest Me in the person of the poor; but yesterday I came to thee in My own person.'

Another day he had asked his chancellor to invite twelve pilgrims to his table. And during the repast, he perceived that there were thirteen in the company, and remarked it to his chancellor. But he, after counting them, said: 'Believe me, Holy Father, there are only twelve!' And then Gregory became aware that one of the guests, who was seated not far from him, constantly changed his appearance, sometimes looking like a youth, sometimes like an aged man. When the meal was finished, Gregory led this guest into his chamber, and implored him in the name of God to tell him who he was. And the guest answered: 'Know then that I am the shipwrecked mariner to whom thou once gavest the silver porringer in which thy mother



was wont to send thee cooked vegetables! And know also that since that day, the Lord chose thee to become the head of His Church and the successor of Saint Peter!’ And Gregory asked: ‘But how is it that thou knewest that the Lord destined me to this office?’ And the stranger responded: ‘I knew it because I am an angel, charged now by the Lord to watch over thee, and all that thou askest of Him can be obtained through me!’ And instantly he vanished.

At that time there was a hermit, a man of great virtue, who had abandoned all things to consecrate himself to God, and who had nothing left but a cat; and his sole pleasure was to stroke this cat as it lay in his lap. This hermit prayed God to make known to him the company to which he would be admitted in Heaven, as a reward for his abnegation. And God revealed to him that he would be admitted to the company of Gregory, the Roman Pontiff. At this the hermit was grief-stricken, and said to himself that his poverty was of little profit, if it did not suffice to lift him above a man who was so rich in worldly goods. But Our Lord said to him: ‘The rich man is not the man who possesses riches, but he who covets them. Nor canst thou compare thy poverty to Gregory’s wealth, for thou takest more pleasure in caressing thy cat than Gregory takes in the possession of wealth which he despises, and which he uses only to supply the needs of the poor.’ And the anchorite thereupon prayed God to grant him the grace of being admitted to the reward which was stored up for Saint Gregory.

Upon being accused before the Emperor Maurice and his sons of having caused the death of a bishop, Gregory wrote to one of the emperor’s court a letter in which he said: ‘Make known to my masters that if I, their slave, had it in mind to do harm to the Longobards, the Longobard race would today not have either king or duke, or count, and would be destroyed. But I fear God too much to have part in causing the death of anyone.’ What admirable humility! Gregory, the supreme pontiff, calls himself the emperor’s slave, and the emperor his master. What wondrous innocence!

When the emperor was persecuting him and the Church of God, Gregory wrote: ‘I am so sinful that you are surely pleasing God the more that you persecute me more violently.’

One day the emperor saw a stranger rise up before him, dressed as a monk; and he brandished a naked sword, and predicted to the emperor that he would die by the sword. Maurice, terrified by the

vision, forthwith ceased to persecute Gregory, and besought God to punish him in this life, rather than to reserve his punishment for the life to come. And at once, in a vision, he heard the voice of God decree that he, his wife, his sons, and his daughters, were to be slain by the soldier Phocas. And so it came about: for a short time later, a soldier named Phocas put the emperor to the sword with all his family, and followed him upon the imperial throne.

One Easter day Gregory was celebrating the Mass in the church of Saint Mary Major: and when he pronounced the words *Pax Domini*, the voice of an angel responded, *Et cum spiritu tuo.* Since that time the pope pontificates each Easter in this church, and when he says the *Pax Domini*, none of the assistants is allowed to respond.

Of old there had been in Rome an emperor named Trajan, who was hastening to set out to war, when a widow had come to him in tears, and said: 'I beseech thee to avenge the blood of my son, who has been slain unjustly!' Trajan had answered that if he came back alive from the war, he would see to it that justice was done for the death of the young man. But the widow persisted: 'And what if thou diest on the field? Who then will do me justice?' 'He who reigns after me,' answered Trajan. 'But what will it profit thee if another does me justice?' asked the woman. 'Nothing!' said Trajan. 'Is it not better, then,' said the widow, 'that thou thyself do me justice, in order to be sure of the guerdon of thy good deed?' And Trajan, moved with pity, dismounted from his horse, and saw to it that the murder of the widow's son was avenged. It is also related that one of Trajan's sons, racing on horseback through the streets of the city, had run down and killed the son of a poor woman: whereupon the emperor had given his own son as a slave to the bereaved mother, and had begifted the woman munificently.

Now one day Gregory was passing by the Forum of Trajan, and the memory of the righteousness and kindness of the old emperor came into his mind; so much so that when he came to the basilica of Saint Peter, he wept bitterly for Trajan, and prayed for him. And a voice from above said to him: 'Gregory, I have granted thy prayer, and released Trajan from eternal damnation; but in future beware of praying for a damned soul!' According to John of Damascus, the voice simply said to Gregory: 'I grant thy prayer and I pardon Trajan!' This much, at least, is beyond doubt; but there is disagreement about the details. Some advance the theory that Trajan

was restored to life long enough to become a Christian and thus to obtain his pardon. Others say that Trajan's soul was not completely freed from eternal torment, but that his punishment was merely suspended until the day of the Last Judgement. Still others hold that Trajan's pains were simply made milder, at Gregory's demand. Yet others — among whom is John the Deacon, who compiled the life of the saint — declare that Gregory did not pray for Trajan, but only wept for him. But God in His compassion has oftentimes heard what man desires in his heart, even though he dare not pray for it. And there are some who hold that Trajan was dispensed from material punishment, which consists of the torments of Hell, but not of the moral penalty, which consists of being deprived of the sight of God.

There are also certain authors who affirm that the voice from Heaven, after conceding to Gregory the pardon of Trajan, added: 'But as to thee, thou must needs be punished for praying for a damned soul! Choose then between two penalties: either thou shalt pass two days after thy death amidst the sufferings of Purgatory, or thou shalt bear sickness and pain for the rest of thy life!' The saint is then supposed to have chosen the latter punishment. The fact is, moreover, that from that time he was never free from sickness, being tormented now by fever, again by gout, and at other times by excruciating pains of the stomach. In one of his letters he writes: 'Gout and other infirmities cause me so much suffering that life weighs heavy upon me, and I yearn for the remedy of death.'

A woman who sometimes offered bread in the church, as was the usage of the faithful, began one day to laugh when, at the consecration, Gregory uttered the words: 'May the Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ profit thy soul unto life everlasting!' At once the saint drew back the hand which was about to place the Host upon the woman's tongue, and set the sacred Host upon the altar. Then, before all the congregation, he asked the woman why she had dared to laugh. And the woman made answer: 'I laughed because you called this morsel of bread, which I kneaded with my own hands, the "Body of Christ."' Then Gregory prostrated himself and prayed to God for the woman's unbelief; and when he arose, he saw that the Host which lay upon the altar had been changed into a piece of flesh in the form of a finger. He showed this flesh to the incredulous woman, who immediately came back to the faith. And again the

saint prayed, and again the flesh took the form of bread; and Gregory gave it in Communion to the woman.

Certain princes asked the pope for some precious relic, and he gave them a small piece cut from the dalmatic of Saint John the Evangelist. But the princes, deeming such a relic unworthy of them, returned it scornfully to Saint Gregory. Thereupon, having said a prayer, he pierced the cloth with the point of a knife; and instantly a jet of blood spurted out, thus miraculously giving proof of the preciousness of the relic.

A rich man of Rome had abandoned his wife, and Gregory had punished him with excommunication. He wished therefore to take revenge on the pope; but not daring to openly resist the power of the pope, he had recourse to magicians, who promised to send a demon into Gregory's horse, so that the saint would be thrown and killed. And the next time that Gregory was about to mount his horse, the animal, possessed of the devil, began to kick and rear so viciously that no one could control him. But Gregory perceived that this was the work of the devil; and with a single sign of the cross, he calmed the horse, and cast blindness upon the magicians. Presently they came and confessed their sin, and later were baptized. But Gregory would not cure their blindness, for fear that they would again lapse into the practise of magic; but he had them cared for, their whole life long, at the expense of the Church.

Here is another incident, which we read in the book which the Greeks call *Lymon*. The abbot of a monastery founded by Saint Gregory came to him one day, and told him that one of the monks had in his possession three pieces of silver. To make an example of him, Gregory excommunicated the monk. But shortly afterward the monk died; and Gregory, learning of his death, was much grieved at having let him die without absolution. As a final resort, he took a leaf of parchment, and wrote upon it an act by which he absolved the dead man of the excommunication imposed upon him; and he ordered one of his deacons to read the act at the grave of the defunct. And the following night the monk appeared to his abbot, and told him that since his death he had been held in prison, but had at last received his pardon.

Saint Gregory instituted the offices and the chant of the Church, and established a school for the chant. For this purpose he built two houses, one close by the basilica of Saint Peter, the other near

the church of the Lateran. Even today there can be seen, in one of these houses, the pallet upon which he lay while composing his chants, the cane with which he threatened the pupils of the school, and an antiphonary written by his hand. He it was likewise who added to the Canon of the Mass the following words: '*Diesque nostros in tua pace disponas atque ab æterna damnatione nos eripi et in electorum tuorum jubeas grege numerari*,' which means, 'And (we pray Thee) to dispose our days in peace, and to command that we be saved from eternal damnation, and numbered among the flock of Thine elect.'

And at last Saint Gregory, after having reigned upon the throne of Saint Peter for thirteen years, six months, and ten days, fell asleep in the Lord, full of good works. On his grave is written:

*Suscipe terra tuo de corpore sumptum  
Reddere quod valeas vivificante Deo.  
Spiritus astra petit, leti nil vira nocebunt,  
Cui vitæ alterius mors magis ipsa via est.  
Pontificis summi hoc clauduntur membra sepulchro,  
Qui innumeris semper vixit ubique bonis,*

which means,

'Receive, O earth, what was taken from thy body, which thou canst restore when God awakens it. The spirit soars to the stars, nor has Death any fears for him to whom it is the very path to a better life. In this tomb are enclosed the remains of that supreme Pontiff, who ever and everywhere lived in good works.' His death occurred in the year 604, in the reign of the Emperor Phocas.

After his death, Rome and the whole country were stricken with a famine; and the poor, for whose needs Gregory had always liberally provided, came to his successor, and said: 'Lord, our father Gregory used to feed us: may Thy Holiness not leave us to die of hunger!' But the pope was vexed at these words, and replied: 'Gregory was ever seeking popular acclaim, and sacrificed everything for it: but as for us, we can do nothing for you!' And he sent them off without aiding them. Then Saint Gregory appeared to him three times, and chided him gently for his harshness and unfairness. But the pope was at no pains to make amends. The fourth time Gregory appeared to him grim-visaged and terrible, and struck him on the head; and the pope died but a short time later.

While this same famine still lay upon the land, a certain number of spiteful persons began to condemn Saint Gregory, declaring that he had lavished and wasted the entire treasury of the Church. And in order to take revenge upon his memory, they prevailed upon the clergy to burn the saint's writings. And a few of them were indeed burned; and they were making ready to burn the rest when the deacon Peter, who had been a member of the saint's household, and had written down the four books of the *Dialogues* at his dictation, came forward to protest against this destruction. He said firstly that it would accomplish nothing, since Gregory's writings were already scattered to every part of the world. And he added that it was a dreadful sacrilege to destroy the work of a man upon whose head he had oftentimes seen the Holy Ghost descend in the form of a dove. And the deacon said that in order to give proof of the truth of his assertion, he was ready to die on the spot; and he declared that if he did not obtain the death for which he asked, he would consent to the burning of his master's books. For Saint Gregory had told him that if ever he revealed the secret of the appearance of the Holy Dove, he would die forthwith. Then the venerable Peter vested himself in the solemn robes of a deacon, and swore upon the Holy Scriptures that what he had affirmed was true: and the moment he had finished his oath, he breathed forth his soul without passing through the agony of death.

A monk of Saint Gregory's monastery had amassed a sum of money. Then the saint appeared in a dream to another monk, and told him to make known to his brother monk that he was to give away his store of money and to do penance, and that if he failed to do this he would die in three days. Hearing this, the monk was stricken with fear, and made haste to distribute his hoard and to mortify himself. But nonetheless he was assailed by a fever so intense that for three days he seemed about to breathe his last. His brethren surrounded him, chanting the Psalms, until on the third day they broke off their singing and began to heap reproaches upon him. But on a sudden the monk revived, opened his eyes, and said to them with a smile: 'May the Lord pardon you, my brothers, for having judged me so harshly; for I was accused by you as well as by the Devil, and I knew not which to answer first. And if henceforth you see a man in his last agony, spare him your reproaches, and visit him with your compassion! Know then that I have just now been

judged, with a devil as accuser; and that with the help of Saint Gregory I have succeeded in meeting all the charges of the enemy, save only one, which I was forced to avow, and which has cost me these three days of torture.' The brothers asked him what that one charge was. He replied: 'I may not tell you, for when Saint Gregory sent me back to you, the Devil complained bitterly thereat, and thought God was returning me so that I might do penance for that one thing; and therefore Saint Gregory had to guarantee that I would never tell anyone.' Then he cried out: 'O Andrew, Andrew, thou shalt perish within the year, thou who, by thine evil counsels, hast exposed me to such a peril!' Whereupon the monk expired. And in Rome there was a certain Andrew, who, at the very moment when the monk called him by his name, was stricken with a dire malady, but was unable to give up the ghost despite his agonies. The wretched monk then called to him all the brethren of the monastery, and confessed to them that at his behest the deceased monk had stolen certain manuscripts from the library and had sold them to strangers. And hardly had he finished his confession when he closed his eyes and breathed his last.

At a time when the Ambrosian office was still used in the churches more readily than the office composed by Saint Gregory, Pope Adrian convened a council, which decreed that the Gregorian office alone should be universally observed. This we read in the life of Saint Eugene. In accordance with this decree, the Emperor Charlemagne, by means of threats and tortures, compelled the clergy throughout his empire to use the Gregorian office; and he burned the books of the Ambrosian office, and cast into prison a number of priests who wished to continue to use it. When the saintly Bishop Eugene came to attend this council, it had already been concluded three days previously. He persuaded the pope to recall all the prelates who had been present at the council even though they were already a three days' journey distant. The new council determined to place the Ambrosian and the Gregorian missals side by side upon the altar of Saint Peter. The doors of the church were to be closed and sealed with the seals of the bishops and of the council; and the bishops were to spend the night in prayer, that God might reveal to them, by some sign, which of the two offices should be preferred for use in the Church. All this was done: and the next morning, when the doors of the church were opened, the two missals, which had been left

closed, lay open upon the altar. — But another version of the story declares that the Gregorian missal had been miraculously broken apart, and that its leaves were found scattered over the altar, whereas the Ambrosian missal was open, but remained in the spot where it had been placed: and this was taken for a sign that the Gregorian office was to be used throughout the world, while the Ambrosian should be retained in the church of Saint Ambrose. And this was the decision of the Fathers of the Council, and is still the usage today.

John the Deacon, who compiled the life of Saint Gregory, tells the following story. One day, while he was busy at his work by the light of a lamp, a stranger appeared before him, bearing the insignia of the priesthood, and covered with a white mantle which was so transparent that the black tunic could be seen underneath. The stranger drew near to the deacon and burst into laughter. And when John asked him what evoked such laughter from so grave a personage, he answered: 'It is the sight of thee writing the history of dead men, whom thou hast not known while they were alive!' And John said to him: 'It is true that I did not know Saint Gregory in person, but what I write about him I have heard from good authority!' The stranger returned: 'Moreover, I care little what thou dost: but as for me, I too shall do what is in my power!' Thereupon he blew out the lamp by which the deacon was writing, and struck him so hard that the poor deacon thought he was dead. Then Saint Gregory appeared to him, with Saint Nicholas at his right and the deacon Peter at his left; and he said to him: 'O man of little faith, wherefore hast thou doubted?' Meanwhile the stranger was hiding beneath the bed; and Gregory took a huge torch from Peter's hands, and burned the intruder's face until it was as black as an Ethiopian's. Then a spark fell upon the stranger's mantle, and consumed it; and the unknown, who was none other than the Devil, stood forth as black as soot. And the deacon Peter said to Saint Gregory: 'In good sooth we have well blackened him!' And Saint Gregory replied: 'Oh no, we have not blackened him: we have merely made him appear in his true colours!' Whereupon they vanished, leaving a great light in John's cell.



## SAINT LONGINUS

MARCH 15

Longinus was the centurion who was assigned by Pilate to stand guard with his soldiers at the crucifixion of the Lord, and who pierced His side with a lance. He was converted to the Christian faith when he saw the signs which followed upon the death of Jesus, namely the darkening of the sun and the quaking of the earth. But it is said that what led to his conversion chiefly was that he was afflicted with a malady of the eyes; and by chance he touched his eyes with a drop of the blood of Christ which ran down the shaft of his lance, and immediately his eyes were healed. He then quit the military life, received instruction from the apostles, and for twenty-eight years led the life of a monk at Cæsarea of Cappadocia, working many conversions by his word and his example.

He was brought before the governor of the province, and when he refused to sacrifice to the idols, his teeth were torn out and his tongue cut off. But this did not deprive Longinus of the power of speech. Laying hold of an axe, he set about smashing the idols, saying: 'If these be gods, let them show themselves!' And demons issued forth from all the idols, and entered into the bodies of the governor and his aides. Longinus said to these demons: 'Why do you dwell in the idols?' They answered: 'We dwell wherever the name of Christ is not invoked, and the sign of the cross does not appear!' Meanwhile the governor had lost his sight. And Longinus said to him: 'Poor man, know that thou canst be cured only after thou hast put me to death! But as soon as I am dead I shall pray for thee, and shall obtain the salvation of thy body and of thy soul!' The governor therefore had him beheaded, and then, falling down before his corpse, wept and did penance: and at once he regained his sight and his health, and passed the rest of his life in doing good works.

## SAINT PATRICK

MARCH 17

Saint Patrick lived about the year of the Lord 280. One day, while he was preaching the Passion of Christ to the king of Scotland, he pierced the king's foot, by accident, with the point of the staff on which he was leaning. And the king said nothing, and suffered without protest, thinking that the holy bishop had knowingly inflicted the wound, and that in order to be admitted to the faith of Christ, he had first to suffer as Christ had suffered. And when the saint became aware of the king's pious error, he was filled with wonderment. He healed him by prayers, and in addition obtained that no venomous beast could do hurt to anyone throughout the kingdom. It is said, moreover, that in Scotland, thanks to Saint Patrick, the bark of trees is efficacious against poisons.

A certain man had stolen a sheep from his neighbour and had eaten it. Saint Patrick several times called upon the thief to confess his theft and to do penance: but when no one came forward, he commanded in the name of Christ, in the midst of the whole congregation, that the stolen sheep should disclose his whereabouts by bleating in the thief's stomach. And at once the sheep began to bleat in the belly of the thief, who confessed his sin and did penance. And thenceforth the other inhabitants refrained from stealing.

Whenever Saint Patrick came upon a cross, he used to bend the knee before it. But one day he passed by a large and beautiful cross without seeing it. His companions asked him why he had not seen and venerated it. But at that moment a voice came out of the earth and said to him: 'Thou hast not seen this cross because the man who is buried underneath is a pagan, and is unworthy of the sacred sign!' And Saint Patrick had the cross taken away and placed elsewhere.

He then went to preach in Ireland, but his preaching bore little fruit. Therefore Saint Patrick implored God to reveal Himself to the Irish by some sign which would strike terror into their hearts, and lead them to repentance. Then, at God's command, he traced a wide circle with his staff, and a very deep pit opened within it. And it was revealed to Patrick that the pit was the opening to a purgatory, and that those who chose to go down into it could expiate their sins

therein, and would be spared their purgatory after death; but also that most of those who entered the pit would never come out again, and that those who would come out would have remained in the purgatory from one morning to the next. And a few persons went down into the pit, and, in very deed, never came out again.

But long after Saint Patrick's death a nobleman named Nicholas, who had been guilty of many sins, bethought himself to do penance by going down into the saint's purgatory. For a fortnight he made ready by fasting and prayer, as was the custom. Then he entered the pit, and found himself in a chapel where monks vested in albs were singing the divine office; and these told him to put on the armour of constancy, that he might be able to withstand the deceits of the Devil, with which he was about to be assailed. He asked them what he must do to resist the demons. The monks replied: 'When thou art aware that they wish to torture thee, call out at once; "Jesus, Son of the living God, have mercy on me, a miserable sinner."' Then the monks disappeared, and Nicholas was surrounded by demons, who at first sought to win his obedience by flattering promises. But when he spurned them, he heard a sound like to the roaring of wild beasts; and it was as if the whole world were tumbling into chaos. Then, trembling with fright, he cried out: 'Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on me, a miserable sinner!' And at once the tumult subsided. Next Nicholas was led into another place, where a horde of demons surrounded him and said: 'Thinkest thou that thou canst escape us? Escape thou shalt not: for thy torture is only beginning!' Thereupon a huge fire sprang up before him, and the demons said: 'Yield, or we shall throw thee into the fire!' And indeed they seized him and cast him into the flames. But the instant he felt the heat of the fire, he called upon Jesus Christ, and at once the flames died out. Then he was taken to another place, where he saw some men being burned alive, others being crushed down upon hot iron spikes, others lying prone on the ground and gnawing the earth, crying out for pity, while the demons rained blows upon them. Serpents were devouring the members of some: monsters were tearing out the vitals of others with red-hot iron hooks. And when Nicholas still refused to obey the demons, they made ready to work these divers torments upon him. But again he invoked the name of Jesus, and was delivered from these pains. Next he was carried to another place where he saw men being thrust into

huge frying-pans, and where there was a gigantic wheel, with men bound to each of its spokes; and the wheel spun round so swiftly that it seemed to form a circle of fire. He also saw a large house in which were trenches filled with molten metal; and some men had one foot in the metal, some two feet, some their bodies up to the knees, some up to the waist, some up to the chest, some to the neck, and some to the eyes: but Nicholas passed through all these places by calling upon Christ. Farther on he saw an enormous hole out of which poured a vile, stinking smoke; and men were struggling to escape from the hole, but the demons pushed them back. And the demons said to Nicholas: 'The place which thou seest before thee is the circle of Hell wherein dwells our master Beelzebub. And if thou dost not now obey us, we shall cast thee into this hole, and never again shalt thou emerge from it!' But Nicholas still refused: and the demons pitched him headlong into the hole. The pain which then seized him was so fierce that he well-nigh forgot to invoke the name of the Lord: but after a time he cried out in his heart (for he was no longer able to speak): 'Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on me!' And instantly he emerged from the hole, and the horde of demons fell back before him.

Next he was led to a place where he had to cross a very narrow bridge, which was as slippery as ice, and beneath which flowed a great river of fire and sulphur. He almost abandoned hope of crossing the bridge, when he remembered the prayer which had already saved him so many times; and setting his foot in all confidence upon the bridge, he cried out once more: 'Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on me!' Then there arose a shouting so fearful that Nicholas barely kept himself from falling; but again he called upon the name of Jesus, repeating his prayer at each step, and thus made his way across to the other side. And when he had traversed the bridge, he came into a verdant meadow, in which bloomed a thousand varieties of sweet-smelling flowers. And two fair youths came to meet him, and led him to the gate of a city which shone with gold and precious stones; and from the gate came forth a perfume so delightful that Nicholas, breathing it, forgot all the terrors and sufferings through which he had passed. And the two young men told him that this city was Paradise. But when Nicholas started forward to enter it, his two companions said that he must first return to his own folk on earth, going back over the same way by which he

had come; but that this time the demons would not molest him, but would flee in consternation at the sight of him. And the youths added that within thirty days Nicholas would go to his rest in the Lord, and become forever a citizen of the heavenly city. Then Nicholas made his way back to earth, to the very spot whence he had departed. He gave account of all that had befallen him: and thirty days later, he fell asleep happily in the Lord.

## SAINT BENEDICT

MARCH 21

This saint was called Benedict because he blessed many; or because he had received many blessings in this life; or perhaps, because all blessed him, or because he merited eternal blessing.

The life of Saint Benedict was written by Saint Gregory.

Benedict was born in the province of Nursia, but his parents brought him to Rome at an early age, so that he might engage in the study of the liberal arts. But when still a boy he turned his back on study and fled from Rome, to go and live in the desert. His nurse, who regarded him with tender affection, followed him to a certain place called Enfide.

There, wishing to bake some bread, she borrowed a sieve to sift the grain: and when she put it on the table, by mischance she let it fall, so that the sieve was broken in two. Then Benedict, seeing her weep, took the two pieces, said a prayer over them, and so caused them to come together without a trace of the breakage.

After this he stole away from his nurse and took shelter in a cave, where he lived for three years unknown to anyone, save to a monk named Romanus, who provided him with food. And since the cave wherein Benedict dwelt was difficult to reach, Romanus tied a loaf of bread to a long cord, and lowered it to Benedict from the top of the mountain; and he had attached a little bell to the cord, and its ringing warned the young hermit to come out and take the loaf. But the ancient Enemy of mankind, envious of the charity of the one and the food of the other, broke the bell, so that Benedict no longer knew of the arrival of his loaf. Then Our Lord appeared to a certain priest who was preparing for the Easter feast, and said to him:

'Here thou art making ready for a banquet, and at this very moment, yonder in a cave on the mountain, my servant is suffering from hunger!' The priest set out at once; and when at last he found Benedict's retreat, he said to him: 'Arise, and let us eat the repast which I have brought, for today is the feast of the Pasch!' And Benedict answered: 'Verily it is a feast day, since it is given to me to see thee!' For in his solitude he had not known that the feast of the Pasch had arrived. And the priest said to him: 'Know that today is truly the day of the Resurrection, and that the Lord Himself has sent me to enable thee to break thy fast!' Whereupon, thanking God, they sat down together to eat.

Another day a blackbird began to fly around Benedict's head and straight into his face; but the saint made the sign of the cross, and straightway the bird vanished.

And another time the devil set before his eyes the image of a woman whom he had seen in the past, and kindled in him such a fire of passion that little was wanting to make him yield to desire and to abandon his solitary life. But of a sudden he recovered the mastery of himself, stripped off his clothing, and rolled in the thorns and brambles which lay thick about his cell, until his whole body was lacerated. Thus he forced out the sickness of his soul through the wounds of his body, and conquered sin. And thenceforth he never again felt the sting of the flesh.

Meanwhile his fame spread throughout the whole region. And when the abbot of a nearby monastery died, all the monks came to entreat him to become their abbot. For a long time he refused, and told them that, considering their way of life, he was not the leader that befitted them. But in the end he gave his consent. But when he proved to be very strict in applying the rule, the monks regretted that they had taken him for their abbot. One day therefore they mixed poison into his wine, and offered him to drink when he was about to go to his rest. But Benedict made the sign of the cross over it, and instantly the glass was shattered, as if it had been struck by a stone. And Benedict understood that the glass had contained a death-dealing potion, since it had been unable to withstand the sign of life; and he rose up, smiling calmly, and said: 'May God grant you pardon, my brethren! Did I not say to you that your ways and mine would not agree?' And thereafter he left the monastery, and returned to his cave, where his sanctity was made mani-

fest by a great number of miracles. The faithful flocked to him in such numbers that he founded twelve monasteries.

In one of these monasteries was a monk who, while his brethren were at prayer, used to leave the chapel, and busied himself with temporal matters. Being apprised of this behaviour by the abbot of the monastery, Benedict watched, and saw that the monk was drawn out of the chapel by a black dwarf, who pulled him by the skirt of his robe. And he said to the abbot and to a monk named Maurus: 'Do you not see the man who is drawing him along?' 'No!' they answered. And he said to them: 'Let us pray, then, that you too may see him!' And when they had prayed, Maurus saw the dwarf, but the abbot was still unable to see him. On the morrow, when the prayer was ended, Benedict again met the monk outside the chapel, and in punishment of his blindness dealt him a blow of his staff. Thereafter the monk no longer absented himself from the divine office. And the devil no longer dared to disturb him in his meditations, as if he himself had been struck down by the blow of Saint Benedict's staff.

Three of the monasteries were situated on a steep mountain, and the monks were forced to come down to the foot of the mountain to draw water. They therefore besought Benedict to move their monasteries elsewhere. But one night Benedict climbed the mountain with a young brother, prayed for a long time, and then placed three stones in a certain spot. On the morrow he said to the monks: 'Go to the place where you find three stones, and there dig up the earth!' They went thither, saw that already water was seeping from the rock, and dug a trench, which filled with water at once: and even to this day the water gushes forth in such abundance that it flows down to the foot of the mountain.

One day a man was scything the brambles around the monastery, when the blade of the scythe came loose from the shaft and fell into a bottomless lake, which grieved the man sorely. But Saint Benedict put the shaft of the scythe into the deepest part of the lake, and immediately the blade rejoined the shaft.

Another time, the young monk Placidus, while drawing water, fell into the torrent, and in a twinkling had rolled to the bottom of the mountain. Saint Benedict, who was in his cell, saw this in a vision, summoned Brother Maurus, and ordered him to go and search for Placidus. Maurus, after receiving Benedict's blessing,

stepped into the stream; but it seemed to him that he was walking on solid ground. He came upon Placidus, drew him out of the water by the hair, and came to give account of what had happened to Saint Benedict, who declared that it was due to Maurus' obedience.

A priest named Florentius, who was jealous of the saint, put poison into a loaf and sent it to Benedict as a gift. The saint accepted the present with thanks, and said to a crow which he was wont to feed: 'In the name of Jesus Christ, take this loaf and throw it into a place where no man can reach it!' The crow began to fly around the loaf with his beak open and his wings spread, as if to show that he wished to do the saint's bidding, but could not. And the saint said to him: 'Fear naught! Take it, and do as I have said!' At last the crow seized the loaf and flew off; and after three days he came back unharmed. Thereupon Florentius, seeing that he could not wreak ill upon the body of the master, sought to bring death to the souls of his followers. Into the garden of the monastery he brought seven nude maidens, who danced and sang to excite the monks to fleshly desire. Seeing all this from the window of his cell, Benedict feared for his disciples; and taking several of them with him, he set out to find another abode. But at the moment when Florentius, standing on the threshold, was gloating at his departure, he missed his step and fell to his death. Then Maurus the monk ran after Saint Benedict, and joyfully called to him: 'Come back, for the man who pursued thee is dead!' But when he heard him, Benedict sighed deeply, saddened both because his enemy was no more, and because his chosen disciple had rejoiced at his death. So he laid a penance upon the monk, and continued his journey.

But by moving from his old abode, he did not leave his adversary behind. Coming to Monte Cassino, he transformed a temple of Apollo which stood there into a church dedicated to Saint John the Baptist; and he converted the inhabitants of the surrounding district. But the Enemy appeared to him every day, in the most terrifying forms, and with flames leaping from his eyes; and he said to the saint: 'Benedicte, Benedicte!' And when Benedict did not reply, the Devil went on: 'Maledicte, Maledicte, non Benedicte,' which means, 'accursed, accursed, not blessed. Why art thou so relentless in persecuting me?'

Another day, the brethren strove to lift a stone for the building of



the church, and found that the stone was so heavy that they could not raise it. Then Saint Benedict made the sign of the cross, and the stone was raised without difficulty, which showed that the Devil himself had been sitting on it. Another time, the Devil appeared to Saint Benedict, and said that he was about to go among the brethren who were engaged in building the church. At once Benedict sent a novice to say to them: 'Brothers, be on your guard, because the evil Spirit is prowling about!' Hardly had the messenger said these words when the Devil threw down a section of the wall, which fell upon the poor novice and crushed him. But Saint Benedict had the novice's mangled body brought to him in a sack, and, having prayed over him, raised him to life.

A pious layman used to come to see Saint Benedict each year; and he made the journey fasting, by way of mortification. But on one of these journeys a stranger joined him; and as it was growing late, the stranger showed the pilgrim the supplies which he carried, and said to him: 'Brother, let us take food, lest we become faint in the way!' Twice the stranger made this proffer to the pilgrim, who still refused to break his fast. But the third time, as they were resting in a lush meadow, near a spring of water, the pilgrim, in his weariness, yielded to temptation. And Benedict, the instant the man entered his cell, said to him: 'So, brother, twice the wicked Enemy failed to have the better of thee, but the third time he succeeded!' And the pilgrim, covered with shame, threw himself at the saint's feet.

Totila, king of the Goths, wished to assure himself whether or not Benedict truly possessed the gift of vision. He conceived the idea of sending one of his squires to the saint in royal state, and clothed in a kingly mantle. But when the saint saw him, he cried: 'My son, lay aside the robe which thou wearest, for it does not belong to thee!' And the squire divested himself forthwith of the royal apparel, terrified at having dared to set a trap for such a man.

A clerk who was possessed of the Devil was brought to Saint Benedict, who delivered him, and said to him: 'Go thy way, but beware of eating meat, and likewise of taking holy orders; because the day that thou enterest into orders, the Devil will regain his power over thee!' For a long time the clerk followed the saint's counsel: but one day, being irked that other clerks younger than himself were promoted to the sacred functions, he forgot the warning of Saint

Benedict, and received holy orders. And immediately the Devil began again to torment him, and this time held him in his sway until he brought him to his death.

A certain man sent two flagons of wine to Saint Benedict; but the boy who brought them hid one flagon along the road, and delivered the other to the saint. Benedict accepted the flagon with thanks; and when the boy was about to depart, he said to him: 'My son, do not drink of the flagon which thou hast hidden, but tip it carefully, and thou shalt see what it contains!' Abashed, the boy sped away, and when he found the flagon, he tipped it with care; and out of it came a venomous serpent.

One evening, when Saint Benedict was at supper, a monk who was the son of a senator was appointed to serve him and to hold the light for him. And the young man thought within himself: 'Who is this man, that I should serve at his table and hold the light for him?' And instantly the saint said to him: 'Sound thy heart, my son, sound thy heart!' Then, summoning the brethren, he ordered them to take the lamp from the young monk, and commanded him to confine himself to his cell.

One day Saint Benedict sent out some monks to build a monastery. He told them that on a certain day he would come to them and tell them how to build it. On the eve of the day when Benedict had promised to come to them, he appeared in a dream to the superior whom he had appointed over the monks, and instructed him what he should do in the matter. But the monks did not believe in the vision and awaited his coming in person. Finally they returned to the saint and said: 'Father, long have we waited thee, that thou wouldst come as thou hadst promised us, but thou didst not come.' And Benedict replied: 'Why do you speak thus? Did I not appear to you and point out the place to you? Go and build, as you were directed in the vision.'

Once there were two nuns of noble birth who dwelt not far distant from Saint Benedict's monastery. They could not rule their tongues, and oftentimes grievously offended their superior with their chatter. This was reported to Saint Benedict. And the saint said to them: 'Keep your tongues still or I will excommunicate you.' But he did not actually do so, but merely said this to frighten them. But they failed to improve their conduct; and it came to pass that they died shortly thereafter and were buried in the church. While

the Mass was being read, the deacon called out as was the custom, 'Whoever is under the ban, go forth from this church.' Then the nurse of the two women saw them arise from their graves and depart from the church. This was reported to Saint Benedict. The saint prepared a sacrifice with his own hands and said: 'Bring this to them and the ban shall be lifted.' This was done, and thereafter when the deacon spoke the customary words the women remained in their graves.

Once a monk left the monastery, without having received Saint Benedict's blessing, in order that he might visit his parents. The day that he arrived at their house, he died. He was buried, but the earth refused to accept his body and cast it forth. This happened a second time. Then the monk's parents came to Saint Benedict and begged him that he might bless the body of their son. The saint took the Body of Our Lord and said: 'Go, and place the Host on the breast of your dead son, and then bury him.' This they did and the earth accepted the body.

Another time there was a monk who desired to leave the monastery, and troubled Saint Benedict so sorely to be permitted to leave, that the saint, in anger, gave his permission. No sooner had the monk stepped outside the monastery, than he saw a huge dragon lying in his path, its mouth open as if to devour him. The monk cried out: 'Run quickly, my brothers, and come to my aid.' The brothers ran out, but they could not see the dragon. Then they led the monk back into the monastery and he, shivering and trembling, vowed that he never again would leave.

A certain Goth named Galla, who belonged to the Arian sect, was so consumed with hatred for the religious of the Catholic faith that he was wont to slay every clerk or monk whom he met. One day this man had seized the goods of a peasant and practised the direst tortures upon him; whereupon the peasant declared that he had put his person and his goods under the protection of Saint Benedict. At this Galla put off the peasant's torture, but bound his hands and ordered him to lead him to this Benedict, to whom he had confided his goods. And the peasant guided him to Benedict's monastery, and pointed out the saint, who at that moment was reading quietly in his cell. Galla, in his wild fury, shouted to the saint: 'Now then, get up, and restore to this peasant the property which he has entrusted to thee!' At the sound of this strange voice, Saint Benedict raised his

eyes; and the instant that his glance fell upon the peasant, the tough thongs with which his hands were bound broke asunder. And Galla, smitten with fear at the miracle, threw himself at the saint's feet, and begged him for his prayers. But Benedict did not rise from his reading: he merely called the brethren, and charged them to lead Galla to the chapel, that he might receive the blessing. And when the Goth returned to him, he exhorted him to have done with his insensate cruelty. And Galla, before taking his leave, promised never again to make demands upon the peasant whom Benedict had freed with one look of his eyes.

A great famine was raging in the region of Campania, and in the monastery of Saint Benedict the brethren one day perceived that only five loaves remained to them. But Saint Benedict, seeing their trouble, made them a kindly reprimand, to strengthen their faint-heartedness; and then, in order to comfort them, he said: 'Why do you trouble yourselves over so insignificant a matter? Today bread is wanting, but there is no reason to fear that tomorrow you will not have it in plenty!' And on the morrow two hundred measures of flour were found at the door of Saint Benedict's cell; nor is it known, even today, to what messenger God entrusted the task of bringing them thither. At the sight of this miracle, the brethren, giving thanks to God, learned never to abandon hope in the midst of want.

One day there was brought to Saint Benedict a child who was suffering from elephancy, and the malady was so far advanced that his hair was falling out and his scalp was swelling; and to this was added a hunger that no amount of food would allay. But the saint cured him in an instant; and afterwards this child persevered in good works until the day when he fell asleep in the Lord.

During a famine which was harassing the countryside, Saint Benedict gave to the poor everything that could be found, until there was nothing left in the monastery save a few drops of oil in a glass jar. And then the saint ordered the econome of the monastery to give this oil also to a poor man. But the econome refused to obey, in order that the oil at least might be left for the monks. But when he learned of this, Benedict had the oil thrown out of the window, because he forbade that anything which was gained by disobedience be to the profit of the monastery. The jar fell on the rocks outside, but it did not break, and not a drop of oil was spilled. Saint Bene-

dict then sent someone to fetch the jar, and gave it to the poor man. And at that moment a large cask which was in the cellar of the monastery filled with oil, so that the whole cellar was flooded.

One day Saint Benedict went to visit his sister, and dined with her; but in spite of her pleading, he refused to spend the night under her roof. And his sister poured out tears of entreaty to God, and at once a deluge of rain fell from a clear sky, so that no one could take as much as a step outside the house. Much saddened at this, Saint Benedict said: 'God pardon thee, sister! What hast thou done?' And his sister replied: 'I prayed thee, and thou wouldst not hear me: I prayed God, and He has heard my prayer! He has changed my tears into rain, to compel thee to stay with me!' And the saint did indeed spend the night conversing with his sister about the things of God. And it came to pass, three days later that, Saint Benedict, in his cell, saw his sister's soul ascending to Heaven in the form of a dove. He then had her body brought to the monastery, and buried it in the tomb which he had prepared for himself.

One night Benedict was standing at his cell window, and saw a great light dispelling the darkness. And in a ray of light more brilliant than the sun, he saw the soul of Germanus, the bishop of Capua, being carried up to Heaven. He then understood that this soul had just departed from the bishop's body; and indeed, Saint Germanus had died at that very instant.

The year of his death, Saint Benedict made known to his brethren that he was about to die. And six days before his end, he had his grave digged. On the morrow a fever seized him, and became worse with each day. On the sixth day he was carried to the chapel, and received the Lord's Flesh and Blood to ready him for death. Then, supported by his brethren, he remained standing, and breathed his last in the middle of a prayer.

On this same day two of the brethren, of whom one was confined to his cell, and the other was at a great distance, learned by a revelation of the saint's death. For they saw a shining road which started from Benedict's cell and rose toward the East until it reached Heaven. And a stranger asked them what this road was. And when both replied that they did not know, the stranger said: 'Know then that it is the road by which the blessed Benedict is ascending to Heaven!'

He was buried in the oratory of Saint John the Baptist, which had been constructed upon the ruins of a temple of Apollo. He flourished about the year of the Lord 518, in the time of the older Justin.

## THE ANNUNCIATION

MARCH 25

This feast is called the Annunciation of Our Lord, because on this day the coming of the Son of God in the flesh was announced by an angel. And it was fitting that an angel should announce the Incarnation, because in this wise the fall of the angels was repaired. The Incarnation in sooth took place to repair not only the fall of man, but the ruin of the angels; wherefore the angels were not to be excluded from it. Whence as womankind was admitted to knowledge of the mysteries of the Incarnation and the Resurrection, so likewise was the angelic messenger: for God revealed the one and the other to a woman by means of an angel, namely the Incarnation to the Virgin Mary and the Resurrection to Magdalen.

The Virgin Mary dwelt in the Temple with the other virgins from her third year to her fourteenth, and there made a vow to preserve her chastity, unless God otherwise disposed. Then she was espoused to Joseph, God revealing His will by the flowering of Joseph's staff, as is told in the history of the Nativity of the Blessed Mary. And Joseph went to Bethlehem, his native city, to make all needful preparations for the marriage, while Mary returned to the home of her parents in Nazareth. Nazareth means flower. Whence Bernard says that the Flower willed to be born of a flower, in flower, and in the season of flowers.

And at Nazareth the angel appeared to her and greeted her, saying: 'Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women!' Of this Bernard says: 'Three things invite us to salute Mary; Gabriel's example, John's joyous greeting, and the reward of being greeted in return.' But we must first see why Our Lord wished His mother to be espoused. For this Saint Bernard gives three reasons: 'It was necessary that Mary be espoused to Joseph, in order that by this means the mystery might be hidden from the demons, her virginity might be confirmed by her spouse,

and her modesty and good renown preserved.' Another reason was that the espousal of Mary would take away the curse from every degree of womankind, namely from virgin, wife and widow; whence the Virgin herself was all of these.

Of the angel's greeting, *Hail, full of grace!*, Bernard says: 'In her womb was the grace of divinity, in her heart the grace of charity, upon her lips the grace of courtesy, in her hands the grace of mercy and generosity. And she was truly full of grace, for of her fulness captives have received redemption, the sick their cure, the sorrowful their comfort, and sinners their pardon; the just have received grace, the angels joy, and the Blessed Trinity glory and honour, and the Son of Man the substance of human flesh.'

Of the angel's words, *the Lord is with thee*, Bernard says: 'God the Father is with thee, Who engendered Him Whom thou conceivest; God the Holy Ghost is with thee, of Whom thou conceivest; God the Son is with thee, Whom thou clothest and surroundest with thy flesh.' And again he says: 'Blessed art thou among women, that is, above all women, because thou shalt be a virgin mother, and God's mother.' For women lay under a threefold curse: shame for those who conceived not, whence Rachel said: 'God hath taken away my reproach'; the curse of sin for those who conceived, whence the Psalm says: 'Behold I was conceived in iniquities, and in sins did my mother conceive me'; and the curse of pain for those who brought forth children, whence Genesis says, 'In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children.' And Mary alone of all women is blessed, because she is virgin and fruitful, she conceives in holiness, and gives birth without pain.

And when Mary heard the angel's words, she was troubled at the saying, and thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be. Let us note that she was troubled at the words of the angel, and not at the sight of him; for the Blessed Virgin had often seen the angels, but had not ever heard them speak such things as these. And then the angel comforted her, saying: 'Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold thou shalt bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus (that is, Saviour), for He shall save His people from their sins. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High.' This, according to Bernard, means that He, who is great God, shall be great, namely a great man, a great teacher, a great prophet. Then Mary said to the

angel: 'How shall this be done, because I know not man?' By this she meant that she had made a vow never to have knowledge of man. And the angel answering, said to her: 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the most High shall overshadow thee.' By this is meant that the Holy Ghost would cause her to conceive; and this was to be for four reasons. The first is that the eminent charity of God might be made manifest, since by the ineffable love of God the Word of God was to be made flesh; for as we read in the Gospel of Saint John, 'God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting.' And this reason is given by the Master of the Sentences. The second reason is that by the angel's words it might be evident that the Holy Ghost's conceiving proceeded from grace alone, not being preceded by any human merit: and this reason is given by Saint Augustine. The third reason is that the sole power of God wrought the conception, as Saint Ambrose says. The fourth reason is the motive of the conception; for, as Hugh of Saint Victor writes, 'The motive for a conception according to nature is the love of a man for a woman and of a woman for a man. And therefore since a singular love of the Holy Spirit burned in the Virgin's heart, the love of the Holy Spirit wrought great things in her flesh.' And of the words, *the power of the most High shall overshadow thee*, the Gloss says: 'A shadow is formed by light falling upon a body. The Virgin, as a human being, could not hold the fulness of divinity; but the power of the most High overshadowed her, while the incorporeal light of the godhead took a human body within her, and so she was able to bear God.'

Then the angel added: 'And behold thy cousin Elizabeth, she also hath conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her that is called barren.' And this he said, according to Saint Bernard, in order that the young maiden, hearing that her aged cousin was with child, might take thought to go and visit Elizabeth, and thus occasion be given to the unborn prophet to do honour to his Lord, and to the miracle of his conception another yet more wondrous be added.

And here, Saint Bernard adds: 'O Virgin, make haste to give thine answer! Answer a word and receive the Word, utter thine own word and receive the Word of God, pronounce a word that shall



pass and embrace a Word that shall not pass, arise, run, be opened! Arise by faith, run by devotion, be opened by thy consent!’ And then Mary, extending her hands and raising her eyes to Heaven, said: ‘Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word!’ And at once the Son of God was conceived in her womb, perfect God and perfect man; and on the first day of His conception was in Him as much of wisdom and of power as there would be when He was thirty years old. Then rising up, she went into the hill country to visit Elizabeth; and when she saluted her cousin, the infant Saint John leaped with joy in his mother’s womb. Of this the *Gloss* says: ‘Since he could not manifest his joy with his tongue, he greeted the Lord with joyous heart, and so began his mission as precursor.’

A rich and noble soldier had renounced the world and entered the Cistercian Order. But he was so unlettered that the monks, ashamed of his ignorance, set a teacher to give him lessons. But the lessons were of no avail: he could learn nothing save the two words, *Ave Maria*, which he went about repeating all day long. When he died, and was buried with the other brethren, it came to pass that over his tomb there grew a lovely lily, on each of whose petals were inscribed in letters of gold the words *Ave Maria*. Deeply stirred by this great miracle, the monks cleared the earth from the grave, and saw that the roots of the lily sprang from the dead man’s mouth. Thus they understood the great devotion with which he had pronounced these words.

A highwayman had built a stronghold beside a road, and robbed without mercy all that passed by; but every day he recited the Hail Mary, and allowed nothing to prevent him from so doing. One day a saintly monk came down the road, and the brigand’s men made ready to rob him: but the holy man asked to be brought to their leader, saying that he had a secret for him. He was led into the chief’s presence, and besought him to call together all that dwelt in the fortress, that he might preach the word of God to them. But when they were gathered together, the monk said: ‘You are not all here! There is someone missing!’ And when he was told that no one was absent, he persisted: ‘Look well, and you will see that someone is missing!’ Then one of the brigands cried out: ‘Sure enough, one of the varlets is absent!’ ‘Yes,’ said the monk, ‘and he is the very one for whom I am looking!’ They therefore went

in search of him; but when he came within sight of the man of God, he rolled his eyes in fright, threw himself about like a madman, and refused to come nearer. And the holy man said to him: 'In the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, I adjure thee to say who thou art and why thou art come here!' The varlet made answer: 'Since I am forced to speak, know that I am not a man, but a demon, and I have lived at this brigand's side for fourteen years. Our master sent me to lie in wait for the day when he would neglect to recite the Hail Mary; for on that day he would have fallen to us, and I was ordered to throttle him on the spot. Nothing but this daily prayer kept him from falling into our power. But I spied upon him in vain, for not once did he fail to recite it!' Hearing this, the robber was dumfounded: and he threw himself at the feet of the man of God, begged his pardon, and was thenceforth converted to a better life.

## THE PASSION OF OUR LORD

The Passion of Christ was bitter in its pains, an object of contempt in the mockery that was put upon Him, and fruitful in the many benefits that it bestowed.

The pains of the Passion were fivefold. The first pain consisted in the shame of the Passion. For He bore it in a shameful place, Calvary being reserved for the punishment of criminals. The mode of His death was shameful; the cross indeed was the instrument of death unto thieves, and at that time it was the object of obloquy, although now it is the object of glory. Whence Saint Augustine says of it: 'The cross, which was the torture of thieves, now adorns the forehead of emperors: if God bestowed so great honour on the instrument of His suffering, how much more shall He not bestow upon His servant?' And the Passion was shameful because Our Lord suffered in shameful company; He was numbered among the impious, that is, among the thieves. But afterwards, one of them was converted, namely Dismas, who was at the right hand of Christ, as the gospel of Nicodemus says, and the other was condemned, namely Gesmas, who was at the left. To the one therefore He gave the kingdom, to the other damnation.

of hys andy gret sorowe /

Thys entely the ymbre dayes



### The Passyon of

**O**ur lord was bytten for  
the sorowe that he suf-  
feryd in verysone despi-  
tuous / And of many  
fylthes fructuous /

The sorowe was cause of fyve thynges  
The first by cause it was shamefulte /  
for the place of the mount of caluarye  
wher as malefactours andy crimynel  
persones were put to execucion / And  
he was there put to deth right foull /  
the crosse was the torment of thures /  
And yf the crosse was thenne of sha-  
me andy of byshyne / she is nobl of gho-  
rye andy of honour / wherof saynt  
Austyn / Cuius latronum qui erat  
supplicium et / The crosse whiche was  
the iustice of theys / is nobl become  
the sygne of glorye in the fortrides or  
frontes of emperours / And yf he had  
such honour at his torment / what  
dyde he to hys seruam / for the shame  
ful felaihsch that he dyde to hym /  
for he was sette with malefactours /  
but the one of them was conuerted /

whiche was called dysmas / lyke as  
it is saidy in the gospell of Mathewus  
And he was on the ryght syde of our  
lord / And that other on the lyfte  
syde was dampned whiche was called  
gessmas / To that one thenne he gaf  
the royame of heuene / andy to that  
other helle / wherof saynt Ambro-  
se / *Auctor pietatis in cruce et* / he  
sayth / the auctor of pyte hangyng on  
the crosse curyed offysers of pyte in se-  
culer etandes / that is to saye /  
The persecution to thapostles / peas to  
his disciples / hys to dy to the Jewes  
hys spyrte to the fader / to the byrag-  
ne the messages of the dedynge of the  
souerayn espouse / To the tyst par-  
dys / To synners helle / Andy to  
the Crysten penitent he comandyd the  
crosse / Soo this is the testamēt that  
Jesu cryst made hangyng in the crosse /  
Secondly the sorowe was causedy inuist-  
ly / For none iniquite was founde  
in hym / Andy pryncypally inuistly  
they accusyd hym of thre thynges /  
The first was / they saidy / that he def-  
fended to paye the trellbage / andy for he



The second pain of the Passion consisted in its injustice; for He had done no wrong, and they found no guile in His mouth, and therefore that which was unjustly inflicted, came as a most grievous pain. He was accused chiefly of three things, namely that He had been opposed to the payment of the tribute, that He had called Himself a king, and that He had made Himself the Son of God. Against these three accusations, we, in the name of the Saviour, sing three replies on Good Friday. We sing *Popule meus, quid feci tibi*, O my people, what have I done to thee? In what have I afflicted thee? Answer me. Because I have led thee out of the land of Egypt, thou hast prepared a cross for thy Saviour; because I led thee through the desert for forty years, and fed thee with manna, and brought thee to a land exceeding good, thou hast prepared a cross for thy Saviour; I planted thee as my most beautiful vineyard, and thou art become to me exceeding bitter, and with a spear thou hast pierced the side of thy Saviour! In these words Christ shows forth the three benefits which He conferred upon His people, namely the deliverance from Egypt, guidance in the desert, and the planting of the vineyard in a choice place. Thus it is as if He said to them, 'Thou accusest Me of refusing the tribute, when thou shouldst rather thank Me for freeing thee of tribute; thou accusest Me because I called Myself a king, when thou shouldst rather thank Me for giving thee royal fare in the desert; thou accusest Me of saying that I am the Son of God, when thou shouldst rather thank Me for choosing thee as My vineyard, and planting thee in a fairly chosen place!'

The third pain of the Passion consists in that Our Lord suffered at the hands of His friends: for 'twould be a lighter woe to suffer at the hands of those who had some reason to be His enemies, or who were strangers and foreigners to Him, or to whom He had done some wrong. But on the contrary those who are His friends, or who should be His friends, are the agents of His suffering. Thus Saint Bernard says: 'O sweet Jesus, how sweetly Thou hast dealt with men, what great and abundant gifts Thou hast given them, what keen and bitter sufferings Thou hast borne for them, harsh words, harsher blows, and most harsh torments!'

The fourth pain of the Passion was due to the tenderness of His body, whence Saint Bernard says: 'O Jews, ye are stones, and ye strike a softer stone, out of which resounds the ringing of piety,

and gushes the oil of love!' And Saint Jerome says: 'Jesus is delivered up to the soldiers to be scourged, and the scourges lacerate that most sacred body, and that breast wherein God dwelt!'

The fifth pain of the Passion consisted in that it affected every part of His being and all His senses. He suffered in His eyes, because He wept with a strong cry and tears, as we read in the epistle to the Hebrews. He also shed tears at two other times, namely at the raising of Lazarus and when He looked out over Jerusalem. But the first of these were tears of love, whence those who saw Him weeping said: 'Behold how He loved him!' And the second were tears of compassion. But on the cross He shed tears of pain. He suffered in His hearing, when insults and blasphemies were heaped upon Him. For He possessed preëminent nobility, being in His divine nature the Son of the eternal King, and in His human nature begotten of royal blood, and being as a man the King of kings and the Lord of lords: and His nobility was reviled by His townsfolk, when they said: 'Is not this the son of the carpenter?' He possessed supreme power, since all things were made by Him, and without Him nothing was made; and His power was belittled by the Pharisees, when they said: 'This man casteth not out devils but by Beelzebub the prince of devils!' and by the chief priests and the scribes and the ancients at the cross, when they said: 'He saved others, Himself He cannot save!' He possessed ineffable truth, since He is the way and the truth and the life; and His truth was denied by the Pharisees, who said to Him: 'Thou givest testimony of thyself: Thy testimony is not true!' And he possessed an unique goodness, as He Himself said: 'One is good, God'; and His goodness was reviled by the Pharisees, who said: 'We know that this man is a sinner'; and again, 'This man is not of God, who keepeth not the sabbath.' He suffered in the sense of smell, because from the hill of Calvary there arose a great stench, which came from the rotting bodies of the dead. Whence the *Scholastic History* says that the word *calvaries* means a bare human skull, and that this place was called the place of Calvary, or simply Calvary, because the condemned were there beheaded, and their skulls left to rot. He suffered in the sense of taste, for when He cried out, *I thirst*, they gave Him vinegar mixed with myrrh and gall. The vinegar was given to make Him die more quickly, so that the guards might be finished with their task; and the myrrh was foul-smelling,

and the gall bitter to the taste. He suffered in the sense of touch, for He was wounded in every part of His body, and from the sole of His feet to the top of His head there was no soundness in Him. Of the pains which He endured in His senses, Saint Bernard says: 'The head upon which the angels looked with fear was pierced with thickly clustered thorns, the face that was fairer than all the sons of men was fouled with spittle by the Jews, the eyes that shone brighter than the sun were clouded in death, the ears that heard the singing of angels now heard the revilings of sinners, the mouth that taught angels was wetted with gall and vinegar, the feet, whose footstool was adored because it was holy, were nailed to the cross, the hands that builded the heavens were stretched out on the cross, and driven through with nails, the body was scourged, the side was pierced with a lance; and there remained in Him naught but the tongue, that He might pray for sinners, and entrust His mother to His disciple.'

The Passion of Christ was an object of contempt, in the mockeries that were put upon Him. Four times He was mocked. The first was in the house of Annas, where they spat upon Him and gave Him blows, and put a blindfold about His eyes. The second was in the house of Herod, who thought Him a fool and of unsound mind, because He would not answer him a word; and so, as a mockery, Herod put on Him a white garment. The third was in the house of Pilate, where the soldiers put a purple garment about Him, and placed a crown of thorns upon His head, and bent the knee before Him, and said: 'Hail, King of the Jews!' The fourth was on the cross, when the chief priests, with the scribes and ancients, mocking, said: 'He saved others, Himself He cannot save! If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him!'

The Passion of Christ was fruitful of many benefits. Its fruits were threefold, namely the remission of sin, the conferring of grace, and the sharing of His glory. And these three fruits were noted in the title which was placed upon the cross, *Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews*: for *Jesus* refers to the first fruit, *Nazareth* to the second, and *King of the Jews* to the third, for in the kingdom of glory we shall all be kings. And of the benefits of the Passion Saint Augustine says: 'Christ took away sins past, present, and to come. Those past He took away by remitting them, those present by draw-

ing us away from them, and those to come by giving the grace to avoid them.'

That the manner of our Redemption was fitting is shown by four reasons, namely that it was most acceptable as an appeasement to God's anger, most apt to cure the malady of sin, most suited to draw mankind to Himself, and most prudent as a means of overcoming the ancient Enemy of man. It was most acceptable in the sight of God as an atonement and a reconciliation, because, as Saint Anselm says in his book *Why God Became Man*: 'As a man there was nothing harder or more arduous that He could suffer in honour of God, freely and not as a debt, than death; nor could He better give Himself to God than by delivering Himself to death in His honour.' Therefore it is written in the epistle to the Ephesians: 'He hath delivered Himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odour of sweetness.' It was most apt to cure the malady of sin, because curing is by contraries: and as the first man, according to Saint Gregory, sinned by pride, disobedience, and gluttony, Christ cured sin by His humiliations, His fulfilment of His Father's will, and the mortal affliction of His body. It was most suited to draw men to Him, for in no other wise could He have more surely drawn mankind to His love and His trust, leaving our free will untrammelled. How well He drew us to His love, Bernard says: 'Above all, O good Jesus, the chalice which Thou hast drunk, and the work of our Redemption, have made Thee lovable. For it easily wins Thee all our love, inviting it most tenderly, demanding it most justly, seizing it most swiftly, stirring it up most vehemently!' And how well He persuaded us to trust in Him is told in the epistle to the Romans: 'If God be for us, who is against us? He that spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how hath He not also, with Him, given us all things?' And Saint Bernard says: 'Who is not carried away with confidence in obtaining what he hopes for, looking upon the manner in which His body is disposed, the head bowed to kiss, the arms outspread to embrace, the hands pierced to pour out gifts, the feet held fast to remain with us, the body full extended to spend Himself wholly for us?' And lastly, the manner of Our Lord's death was most wisely devised to overcome the Devil. In the Book of Job it is written: 'His wisdom has struck the proud one'; and again: 'Canst thou draw out the leviathan with a hook?' And Christ hid the hook of His godhead in the bait of His humanity,



and the Devil, seeking to take the bait of the flesh, was taken by the hook of the divinity. And of this artful taking, Saint Augustine says: 'The Redeemer came, and the deceiver was vanquished; and what did our Redeemer do to him who held us in bondage? He held out to him the mousetrap of His Cross, and placed therein the bait of His blood.'

Three agents brought about the Passion of Christ, and all three were justly punished for their crime. The first was Judas, who betrayed Christ for greed; the second was the Jews, who betrayed Him for envy; the third was Pilate, who betrayed Him for fear. The story of Judas' punishment is given in the life of Saint Matthias, and the punishment of the Jews is related in the life of Saint James the Less. Therefore let us here consider the punishment of Pilate, and his whole life, as we find it in an apocryphal history.

A king named Tyrus, who had seduced a girl called Pyla, the daughter of a miller whose name was Atus, had of her a son; and Pyla gave the child a name composed of her own name and her father's, and called him Pylatus, or Pilate. And when Pilate was three years old, his mother sent him to the king, who made him the playmate of his rightful son, who was about the same age. But the rightful son, just as he was more noble than Pilate by birth, was also more skillful in all the exercises of his age. At this Pilate's jealousy so preyed upon him that it gave him a complaint of the liver; so he slew his brother. Hearing of this deed, the king was sorely grieved, and summoned his council to determine what should be done with the murderer. All were agreed that he should be put to death; but upon reflexion the king was reluctant to double one crime with another, and sent his son to Rome, as a hostage for the tribute which he owed to the empire.

At the same time there was in Rome a son of the king of France, who had likewise been sent there as a hostage. He and Pilate became comrades; but Pilate, seeing him superior both in character and in talent, became envious of him and took his life. Then the Romans, wondering what they could do with him, said: 'This youth, who has already slain his brother and his comrade, might serve the Republic well in dealing with her enemies!' They therefore sent him as a judge to the island of Pontus, where the people had never tolerated the presence of a judge. And Pilate, knowing that his life was at stake, succeeded so well, by promises and threats, by

bribery and torture, that he subjugated this people, by common repute untamable. In memory of this he was called Pilate of Pontus, or Pontius Pilate.

At this time, Herod, learning of the resourcefulness of this man, invited him to come to Jerusalem, and gave him a share in the exercise of his power over the Jews. But later on, Pilate, by dint of money, persuaded Tiberius to give him Herod's place outright. Thus Pilate and Herod became enemies, until the day when Pilate, to conciliate Herod, sent Our Lord to him.

When Pilate had handed Jesus over to the Jews to be crucified, he feared that this condemnation of innocent blood would give offense to Tiberius; and to justify himself he sent one of his courtiers to the emperor. At that time Tiberius was suffering from a grave malady, and heard that there was in Jerusalem a physician who cured all sicknesses by His word alone. Therefore the emperor, not knowing that this physician had just been put to death by Pilate, said to one of his followers, whose name was Volusian: 'Cross the sea with all haste, and order Pilate to send this physician to me!' Volusian set out on his journey; but Pilate, terrified by his demands, asked for a fortnight's grace.

During this delay Volusian made the acquaintance of a woman named Veronica, who had known Jesus, and asked her where he might find Him. And Veronica answered: 'Alas, Jesus was my Master and my God, but Pilate, through envy, condemned Him to die on the Cross!' Volusian was aggrieved at this, and said: 'Sad am I that I cannot carry out the commands of my master!' And Veronica rejoined: 'As Jesus was always travelling about to preach, and I could not always enjoy His presence, I once was on my way to a painter to have the Master's portrait drawn on a cloth which I bore with me. And the Lord met me in the way, and learning what I was about, pressed the cloth against His face, and left His image upon it. And if thy master but looks upon this image, he shall straightway be cured!' And Volusian asked: 'Can this image be bought for gold or silver?' 'No,' said Veronica, 'but sincere piety will obtain its blessings. I shall go to Rome with thee and show the image to Cæsar, and then I shall return to my own land.' Thus they did, and Volusian said to Tiberius: 'This Jesus whom you wished to see was unjustly condemned and crucified by Pilate and the Jews. But I have brought back with me a woman who possesses

an image of Jesus, and who says that if thou wilt look upon it with devotion, thou shalt soon regain thy well-being.' Then Tiberius caused the road to be spread with silken stuffs, and had the image carried to him: and no sooner had he set his eyes upon it than he was made whole.

Thereupon Pontius Pilate was brought to Rome, and Tiberius, aroused to anger, sent for him. But Pilate had put on the seamless tunic of Our Lord, as a safeguard; and the result was that Tiberius, when he saw him, forgot his anger, and could not help treating him with deference. But hardly had he dismissed him, when all his wrath returned: yet each time that he saw Pilate, his ire subsided, to the wonderment of all. At last, at the order of God, or perhaps upon the advice of a Christian, Tiberius had Pilate stripped of his tunic; and then, being able to unleash his fury, he commanded him to be thrown into prison, to await the shameful death which was appointed for him. Learning of this, Pilate took his knife and killed himself. His corpse was weighted with a huge stone and thrown into the Tiber. But the foul and evil spirits laid hold of this foul and evil body; and sometimes by plunging it into the waters, and other times by snatching it up into the air, they brought about countless floods, storms, and other ills, to the terror of the whole world. Therefore the Romans pulled the corpse out of the Tiber and sent it to Vienne as a mark of derision, because the name Vienne comes from the words *via gehennæ*, the road of Hell: or it may have been called *Bienna*, because it was built in two years. But there again the wicked spirits began their foul play, until the people of Vienne, in haste to be rid of this vessel of abomination, buried it in the territory of Lausanne. But the inhabitants of this city also were anxious to rid themselves of the body, and cast it into a chasm surrounded by high mountains; and it is said that even now that place is turbulent with the evil doings of the devils.

Such is the story which we read in the apocryphal account mentioned above: let the reader decide what credit it deserves. And I must add that according to the *Scholastic History*, the Jews accused Pilate to Tiberius of having permitted the massacre of the Holy Innocents, of having set up pagan images in the Temple, and of having purloined the money from the poor-chests for his own profit. These charges caused him to be sent in exile to Lyons, the city of his birth; and there he died, despised by his own people. On the other hand

Eusebius and Bede, in their Chronicles, make no mention of his exile, but say simply that he was overwhelmed with well-merited calamities, and died by his own hand.

## THE DIFFERENCE IN TIME

Now that we have spoken of the feasts that occur within the period of erring, or wandering from the way, which began with Adam and lasted until Moses and which is represented in the Church by the part of the year which runs from Septuagesima to Easter, let us then consider the feasts that occur within the period of reconciliation; it is represented, in the Church, by the part of the year from Easter to the Octave of Pentecost.

## THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD

The Resurrection of Christ occurred on the third day after His Passion. In His Resurrection we consider seven things. The first is how it could be true that He lay for three days and three nights in His grave, and yet arose on the third day. The second, why He did not arise immediately upon His death but waited until the third day; the third, how He arose; the fourth, why He arose at that time and did not postpone His Resurrection until the day of the general resurrection; the fifth, for what motives He arose; the sixth, how often He appeared after His Resurrection; the seventh, how He led out the holy fathers, who were in Limbo, and what He Himself did there.

As to the first, that Christ lay in His grave for three days and three nights, we must take the part for the whole, and say, with Saint Augustine, that of the first day we take the night, the second day in its entirety, and of the third, the morning, and so we have three days; and each day has a night which precedes it. But the Venerable Bede writes that since the Passion of Our Lord, the order of day and night has been changed. For before that time, we counted the day before the night; and now, after the Passion of Our Lord, we count the night before the day. This is a sign that man first fell from a day of grace into a night of sin; and now, through the

death of Christ and His Resurrection, man has arisen from the night of sin into the light of the day of mercy.

As to the second, there are five reasons why Christ did not arise immediately upon His death but awaited the third day. Firstly, this is to signify that He wished to illuminate with the light of His own death, the darkness of our twofold death; for this reason He lay an entire day and two nights in the grave; the day denotes the light of His death, the two nights our twofold death. The *Gloss* on St. Luke, Chapter 24, Verse 46, interprets this; 'and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead the third day, and that penance and remission of sins be preached in His name, unto all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.' Secondly, to verify the truth of His death. For as the truth of an assertion rests upon two or three witnesses, so the truth of an occurrence is established in three days. And that He might prove the truth of His death, He wished to lie three days in the grave. Thirdly, in this He showed His power; for had he arisen immediately, His power to lay down His life and to take it up again would not have been apparent. This is made clear in the *Gloss*, on the first epistle to the Corinthians, Chapter 15, Verse 3: 'how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures: and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures,' when it says: 'His death is mentioned first so that just as His death was clearly proven, His Resurrection might also be clearly proven.' Fourthly, to be a sign of all whom Christ had saved. Of this, Peter of Ravenna writes: 'Our Lord wished to be buried for three days as a sign that He renews those who are in Heaven, redeems those on earth, and saves those in the underworld.' Fifthly, to signify the threefold condition of the righteous. Saint Gregory, in his commentary on Ezechiel, says: 'Our Lord suffered death on Friday, He rested in the grave on Saturday, and arose from the dead on Sunday. This should be a sign for us that our present life is a Friday in which we suffer fear and pain; our Saturday is when we rest in the grave, for after death our soul finds rest; our Sunday is the day when we arise from death, that is the eighth day, and rejoice in the glory of the body and the soul. Suffering on Friday, rest on Saturday, joy on Sunday.'

As to the third, how Christ arose. In this we see His power, for He arose by His own power. Of this it is written: 'I have power to lay it down: and I have power to take it up again,' and again:

'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up again.' Moreover, He arose in the spirit, leaving all suffering behind Him, for it is said: 'But after I shall be risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.' Galilee means transition: and so Christ, after His Resurrection, preceded His disciples into Galilee, that is, from suffering to joy, from mortality to eternity. Pope Leo says: 'After the Passion of Our Lord, the bonds of death were broken, illness was changed into power, mortality into immortality, and shame into godly honour.' Thirdly, His Resurrection was of great profit, for He led the prey with Him. It is written: 'The lion is come up out of his den, and the robber of nations hath aroused himself.' And again, 'And I, if I be lifted up from the earth,' that is, when I bring My soul from Limbo and My body from the grave, 'will draw all things to Myself.' Fourthly, His Resurrection was miraculous, for He rose from the sealed grave. Just as He came from the sealed womb of His mother and came to the disciples through sealed doors, so He was able to go out of the sealed tomb. We read in the *Scholastic History*, that in the year 1111, the cincture of a monk of Saint Lawrence extra Muros fell to his feet though it remained unopened. When the monk was astonished at this, a voice from Heaven said: 'So too was Christ able to arise from the unopened grave.' Fifthly, Christ arose in His own true body, and this He proved six times. He proved it by the angel, who never lies, and through His appearance on several occasions; through His eating, whereby He showed that it was no magic; through His touching, showing that He had a real body; through the marks of His wounds, so that it was the same body in which He died; through His entrance through the closed door, showing that He had arisen in a transfigured body: for doubts had arisen among the disciples as to all these things. Sixthly, Christ arose immortal, for He will nevermore die. Saint Paul says: 'Christ rising again from the dead, dieth now no more.' In addition, Dionysius, in his letter to Demophilus, writes that Christ when He was going to Heaven said to a holy man, Carpus by name, 'I am prepared to die again for the salvation of man.' From this we see, that were it necessary, He would again die for mankind. Carpus, as we read in the same letter, related the following story to Saint Dionysius. An infidel had robbed a Christian of his faith, and this grieved Carpus so much that he fell ill. But Carpus was so holy that he never celebrated Mass without seeing a heavenly

vision. While he should have been praying for the conversion of these two men, he daily begged God to end their lives and burn them without mercy. Once, at midnight, when it was time for him to pray, he awoke and saw that the house in which he was had been split in two; and in its midst he saw a great fire, and, lifting up his eyes, he saw the heavens opened, with Christ in the center surrounded by a heavenly host. In front of the fire, he saw the two men, trembling with fear, being attacked by serpents who came out of the fire to bite and torment them, and he saw other men trying to force them into the fire. When Carpus saw this, he began to gloat over their suffering to such an extent that he did not wish to look upon the vision on high; he was completely lost in contemplating the judgement of the two men, and his sole regret was that they were not thrust into the fire more quickly. However, when he chanced to look up on high, he saw the same vision as before. But behold, Christ arose from His heavenly throne, for the sinners moved Him to compassion, and descended to them in the company of the angels, stretched forth His hand to them and lifted them up. And to Carpus, He said: 'Raise your own hand and strike Me, for I am ready to suffer again for the salvation of mankind. And this is the thing that is pleasing to Me, and not that other men sin.' This story, told us by Saint Dionysius, is recounted here to illustrate Christ's readiness to suffer death anew.

As to the fourth, why Christ did not await the general resurrection, for this there are three reasons. First, because of the dignity of His body, for since it came from God, or is joined with God, it was unseemly that it should be subject to the uncleanness of the earth for so long a time. For it is written: 'Nor wilt Thou give Thy holy one to see corruption,' that is, Thy holy, God-created body. And again: 'Arise, O Lord, into Thy resting place: Thou and the ark which Thou hast sanctified.' The 'sanctified ark' here means the body wherein dwelt the Divinity. Another reason was because of the preservation of the faith; for had He not arisen when He did, the faith would have died out, and no one would have adored Him as the true God. Thus we see that at Our Lord's Passion, all lost their faith except His mother; but when they saw that He had risen, their faith was restored. For it is written: 'And if Christ be not risen again, your faith is vain.' And again, thirdly, Christ's Resurrection was to be the exemplar of our own resurrection. For had He

not risen, how could we ever hope for our own resurrection? And for this reason the apostle says that we too shall rise if Christ be risen. And Saint Gregory says: 'Our Lord Himself has set us an example of that which He has promised us as a reward; for inasmuch as we firmly believe that He arose, so we too may hope for the reward of resurrection on the last day.' And he goes on: 'Our Lord did not wish to remain dead for more than three days; for had He delayed His Resurrection, we should have begun to doubt our own. And so we have the hope of our own when we contemplate the glory of Our Lord.'

As to the fifth reason, why Christ arose, we shall see that it occurred for a fourfold benefit. For His Resurrection justified the sinner, it teaches the renewal of life, it gives promise of reward and effects the resurrection of all. Firstly, for the justification of sinners, for it says: 'Who was delivered up for our sins, and rose again for our justification.' Again, it should teach us a change in our conduct, for again it is written: 'That as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life.' Thirdly, it gives us hope of heavenly reward, for it is written: 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy hath regenerated us unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.' Fourthly, His Resurrection brings about the resurrection of all, for it is said: 'But now Christ is risen from the dead, the first fruits of them that sleep: for by a man (came) death, and by a man the resurrection of the dead.'

From what has been said above, it is apparent that Christ's Resurrection differs in four things from our own. Firstly, His Resurrection occurred on the third day, but ours will not take place until the end of time. Again, His occurred through His own power, ours will occur through His power. Of this, Saint Ambrose says: 'How could He who awakes the others, be awakened by someone else?' Thirdly, we shall be dust, whereas His body remained incorrupt. Fourthly, His Resurrection was the reason for ours, an example, a spiritual comparison. As to the first, the *Gloss*, on the passage in the Psalms: 'In the evening weeping shall have place, and in the morning gladness,' says: 'The Resurrection of Christ is the effective reason for the resurrection of the soul in this, and the body in that, life.' As to the second, it has been written that if Christ be risen,



then we too shall arise. As to the third, we have already said that it is written: 'That as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life.'

As to the sixth, that is, how often Christ appeared, He appeared five times on the day of His Resurrection, and five other times in the days that followed. He appeared first to Mary Magdalen, in order to show that He had died for sinners; then to the women who were returning from the sepulchre; then to Simon, although where or at what moment no one knows; then to the disciples on the road to Emmaus; then to the disciples gathered in the cenacle. Eight days after His Resurrection He appeared to all the disciples together, including Thomas, who had said that he would believe only when he had seen; then to His disciples as they were fishing in the lake of Galilee; then again on Mount Thabor; and again while they were at table in the cenacle, when He upbraided them with their incredulity and hardness of heart; and finally on the Mount of Olives, the day of His Ascension.

Three other apparitions, of which the sacred texts make no mention, are reported to have taken place on the day of Our Lord's Resurrection. He appeared to James the son of Alphaeus, as we shall see in the history of this saint. And according to the gospel of Nicodemus, He appeared to Joseph of Arimathea. This gospel relates that when the Jews learned that Joseph had claimed the Body of Jesus and had placed it in his own sepulchre, they seized him and confined him in a room, and sealed the door, planning to put him to death after the Sabbath. But in the very night of His Resurrection, Jesus commanded four angels to lift up the house where Joseph was imprisoned; and coming to him, He embraced him, and took him away to his house in Arimathea. Finally, it is the common belief that Our Lord appeared first of all to the Virgin Mary. The Evangelists, it is true, do not speak of this; but if we were to take their silence for a denial, we should have to conclude that the risen Christ did not once appear to His mother.

We know that in the time between His Passion and His Resurrection, Christ descended into Limbo, to release the holy Fathers, who there awaited His coming. The gospel gives us no word about this descent into Limbo; but we find an account of it (the truth of which is by no means guaranteed) in the gospel of Nicodemus. According to this book, two sons of the aged Simeon, Carinus and

Leucius, rose from the dead with Christ, and appeared to Annas, to Caiphas, to Nicodemus, to Joseph of Arimathea, and to Gamaliel. And when they were asked what Our Lord had done in Limbo, they answered: "We were enveloped in darkness with our fathers the patriarchs, when suddenly a golden and purple light surrounded us. Thereupon Adam, the father of humankind, joyously exclaimed: "This is the light of the Author of all light, Who promised to send us eternal light!" Then Isaias cried: "This is the Son of God, the Light of the Father, as I foretold in my lifetime, when I said, *the people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; to them that dwelt in the region of the shadow of death, light is risen!*" Then our father Simeon said: "Give glory to the Lord, Whom as a Child I held in my arms, and of Whom I said, the Holy Ghost speaking in me, *my eyes have seen Thy salvation!*" Then a hermit came and said to us: "I am John, who baptized the Christ, and went before His face to prepare His ways, and pointed Him out, and said, *behold the Lamb of God!* And I have come down to you today to announce that Christ will soon come to you!" Then Seth said: "When I went to the gates of Paradise, and prayed God to allow an angel to give me a little of the oil from the tree of mercy, that I might anoint the body of my father Adam, the Angel Michael appeared to me and said that I could not have this oil until five thousand five hundred years had passed." And hearing all these things, the patriarchs and the prophets were filled with joy. But Satan, the Prince of Death, said to Hell: "Make ready to receive Jesus, who boasts that he is the Son of God, and who nonetheless fears death, for he said, *My soul is sorrowful even unto death.* He has restored hearing to many a man whom I had made deaf, and has made to walk straight many a man whom I had lamed." To this Hell replied: "If thou art so puissant, what manner of man is this Jesus, who overcomes thy power?" And Satan said: "I have tempted him, and incited the people against him, and sharpened the lance which pierced his side, and mixed gall and vinegar for him, and prepared the wood of the cross. And at any moment he is going to die, and I shall bring him to thee soon!" Hell responded: "In the name of thy power and mine, I conjure thee not to bring him to me; for I have already made proof of the power of his word, and but a short time ago he ravished Lazarus from my grasp!" At that moment a voice like a clap of thunder was heard, saying: "Lift

up thy gates, O Hell, and the King of glory shall enter in!" At these words, the demons ran to fasten the brazen doors with bars of iron. And David cried out: "Have I not foretold that the Lord would break the gates of brass, and burst iron bars?" And again the voice resounded: "Lift up thy gates, O Hell!" Then the King of glory entered in, stretched forth His hand, and took the hand of Adam, saying: "Peace to thee and to all the just among thy sons!" Then He went forth out of Hell, and all the saints followed Him. And Jesus entrusted Adam to the care of the Archangel Michael, who led him into Paradise. And as we all followed after him, we saw two aged men coming toward us, and one of them said: "I am Henoch, and this is Elias, who came up hither in a fiery chariot. We twain have not yet tasted death, for we must await the coming of the Antichrist, and fight with him, and be slain with him, and on the third day be taken up into the clouds." While Henoch was speaking, there came a man carrying the mark of the cross upon his shoulders, and he said to them: "I was a thief, and was crucified with Jesus, and I believed in Him and implored Him to remember me in the kingdom of His Father. And He answered: *Amen I say to thee, this day shalt thou be with me in Paradise*; and He gave me this mark of the cross, and said: 'Go with this into Paradise, and, if the angel who guards the gate will not let thee in, show him this sign, and say, "Christ, Who now is crucified, has sent me!"' This I did, and the angel unlocked the gate forthwith, and let me into Paradise, and gave me place on the right side.'" And when Carinus and Leucius had said these things, they were suddenly transfigured, and were seen no more.

## SAINT SECUNDUS

MARCH 29

Secundus means *se condens*, one who establishes himself, that is, conducts himself with good morals; or it means, *secundans*, *obsecundans*, one who obeys and submits to the commands of God. Or it may mean, *secum dux*, he who leads himself; for he was his own master, because he directed his senses with reason and was steadfast in good deeds. Or, Secundus means the 'second' and should

be interpreted in connection with *primus*, the first: for there are two ways to eternal life, the one through tears and penance and the other through martyrdom; and this holy martyr not only followed the first way, but the second as well.

Secundus was a stalwart soldier, as well as a valiant knight of Christ, for Whom he suffered a glorious martyrdom in the city of Asti: and even now this city prides itself in his memory, and honours him as a holy patron. His first teacher in the Christian faith was the blessed Calocerus, whom the prefect Sapritius had imprisoned at Asti. But one day, when this Sapritius was about to set out for Tortona to preside at the execution of another Christian prisoner, the blessed Marcian, Secundus asked if he might accompany him, ostensibly for amusement's sake, but really because he wished to see Marcian. And as they were passing through the gates of Asti, a dove came and settled on Secundus' helmet; and Sapritius said to him: 'Seest thou, Secundus, how our gods love thee? They even bid the birds of the heavens to do thee honour!' Later, when they reached the river Tanagrum, Secundus saw an angel walking on the water. And the angel said to him: 'Secundus, have strong faith, and in the like manner thou shalt walk upon the worshippers of idols!' And Sapritius said: 'Brother Secundus, methinks I hear the gods speaking to thee!' And when they came to another river, called the Burima, again an angel appeared, walking upon the water; and he said to Secundus: 'Dost thou believe in Jesus, or dost thou still doubt?' And Secundus replied: 'I believe in the truth of His Passion!' And Sapritius said: 'What is it that I hear?' Arriving at Tortona, they saw the blessed Marcian, who had been set free by an angel, standing at the prison gate; and he said: 'Secundus, enter upon the way of truth, and walk therein, and thou shalt win the palm of faith!' And Sapritius asked: 'Who is that man, who speaks to us as in a dream?' And Secundus answered: 'What seems a dream to thee is to me a warning and a consolation!'

After this, Secundus went to Milan, and there, at the gates of the city, he met Faustinus and Jonitas, who likewise were prisoners for the faith, but had been liberated by an angel and led to that place. And these two holy men baptized him with water from a cloud which changed into rain. And then a dove came down from heaven bearing a consecrated Host which he gave to Faustinus and Jonitas, who in turn confided it to Secundus, charging him to carry it to the

blessed Marcian. Secundus retraced his steps; and when, during the night, he came to the bank of the river Po, an angel came before him, took his horse by the bridle, and led him over the water. Then when they arrived at Tortona, the angel led Secundus into the cell to which Marcian had returned. Thus Secundus was able to give the sacred Host to Marcian; and Marcian, taking it, said: 'May the body and blood of The Lord be with me unto life everlasting!' Then, at the angel's command, Secundus left the prison and returned to his hostel. And shortly after, Marcian was martyred, and Secundus bore his body away and buried it.

Learning of all this, Sapritius summoned him and said: 'Do I see aright? Dost thou profess to be a Christian?' 'Yes!' 'Is it thy desire then to die in torment?' 'It were more just that thou thyself were tortured and put to death!' Then, since he refused to offer sacrifice to the idols, the prefect had him stripped of his garments, but an angel came at once and covered him with a mantle. He was then strapped to a rack, and Sapritius commanded that he be tortured until all the joints of his bones were broken. But once more the Lord restored him to health. The angry prefect then had him put in prison. But there an angel appeared to him and said: 'Arise and follow me, Secundus! I shall lead thee to thy Creator!' Then the angel brought him to Asti and into the prison where Calocerus lay; and there also was the Saviour. Seeing Him, Secundus fell at His feet. But Our Lord said: 'Fear naught, Secundus, for I am thy Lord and Master, and I shall deliver thee from every evil!' Whereupon He blessed them, and returned to Heaven.

The morning of the following day, in Tortona, the guards sent by Sapritius found the prison locked as on the day before, but Secundus no longer there. Sapritius therefore returned to Asti. In order that Calocerus at least should have his punishment, the prefect summoned him; and then he learned that Secundus was in the prison with Calocerus. He therefore had the pair brought before him, and said: 'Our gods themselves, knowing that you treat them with contempt, will that you should perish together!' And when they again refused to worship the idols, he commanded the torturers to pour a mixture of boiling pitch and resin over their heads and into their mouths. But they drank this mixture eagerly as though it were a delightful water, exclaiming aloud: 'How sweet are thy words to my palate! more than honey to my mouth.' Fi-

nally Saprilius ordered them to be beheaded, Secundus at Asti, and Calocerus in the town of Albenga. And as soon as Saint Secundus was beheaded, angels carried his body away and buried it amid chants and hymns of praise. He suffered martyrdom the thirtieth day of March.

## SAINT MAMERTINUS

MARCH 30

While Mamertinus was still a pagan, he was one day worshipping an idol; and suddenly one of his eyes was blinded, and one of his hands withered. He thought that he had offended the gods, and set out in haste to the temple to obtain their pardon. But on the way he met a saintly man named Savinus, who asked him whence his affliction had come upon him. He answered: 'I have offended my gods, and now I go to beseech them to restore to me that which in their wrath they have taken away.' 'Thou errest, my brother,' returned Savinus, 'in taking the demons for gods. Go instead to Germain, the bishop of Auxerre; and if thou followest his counsels, thou shalt be healed!' Mamertinus went off at once; but a rain-storm forced him to halt in a place where Saint Amator and several other holy bishops were buried. He found shelter for the night in a retreat built over the tomb of Saint Concordian. And in a dream he saw a man come to the cell, and summon Saint Concordian to a feast, where, he said, Saint Amator, Saint Peregrinus, and other bishops, were already gathered. And Saint Concordian replied from the tomb: 'I cannot come this night, because I must watch over a guest, to save him from being devoured by the serpents who dwell here.' But presently the stranger returned, and said: 'Saint Concordian, arise and come, and bring with thee thy subdeacon Vivian and his acolyte Junian! In the meantime, Alexander will watch over thy guest!' Mamertinus then saw Saint Concordian take him by the hand and lead him away. But when they came into the presence of the other bishops, Saint Amator said: 'Who is this stranger whom thou bringest to us?' Saint Concordian replied: 'He is my guest!' 'Chase him away,' said Saint Amator, 'for he is unclean, and may not remain in our company!' At this Mamer-

tinus, still in the dream, prostrated himself before Saint Amator, who ordered him to go in all haste to Saint Germain. Thus, as soon as he awoke, he ran to Saint Germain; and when the saint heard the account of his dream, he went back with him to Saint Concordian's tomb. There, beneath the tombstone, they discovered a great number of serpents, over ten feet in length. And Saint Germain commanded them to leave the place, and to find another dwelling where they could harm no one. In this manner Mamertinus came to be baptized. He was restored to health at once, and entered the monastery of Saint Germain, where he became abbot at the death of Saint Allodius.

At that time there was, in this monastery, a holy monk named Marinus, whose obedience Mamertinus wished to put to the test. He therefore assigned him to the meanest task of all, which was to care for the cattle. And while Saint Marinus watched over his beeves and his kine, he shone with such holiness that the birds of the forest flew to him to feed from his hand. A boar sought refuge in his cell, and he shielded it from the dogs which pursued it, and then allowed it to go free. One day, robbers stripped him of his garments and left him nothing but a small tunic. But he ran after them, calling: 'Come back, sirs! I have found a penny sewn in the hem of my tunic, and perchance you have need of this also!' At this the robbers turned back and took both tunic and penny, leaving him stark naked. Thereupon they took the road for their den; but after walking all night, they found themselves, at dawn, before the holy herdsman's cell. The saint greeted them kindly, welcomed them to his cell, washed their feet, and set about preparing food for them as best he could. Seeing this, the thieves were overwhelmed with shame for their misdeeds, and all were converted to the faith.

One day some young monks of the monastery set a trap for a she-bear which was preying upon the sheep, and in the night the bear was caught. But Saint Mamertinus, lying in bed, sensed what had happened; and he arose, went out to the bear, and said to it: 'What brings thee here, poor creature? Be off quickly, or thou wilt be captured!' And he loosed the trap and set the bear free.

When he died, his body was borne to Auxerre. But as the cortege was passing a prison, the corpse suddenly grew so heavy that it could not be moved another step, until one of the prisoners,

whose chains had fallen from him by a miracle, ran out and helped to carry it into the city. Saint Mamertinus was interred with great pomp in the church of Saint Germain.

## SAINT MARY OF EGYPT

APRIL 2

Saint Mary of Egypt, who is also called Saint Mary the Sinner, lived for forty-seven years in the desert in repentance and mortification. She began dwelling there in the year of Our Lord 270, in the time of Claudius.

A certain abbot named Zosimas, who had crossed the Jordan and was travelling about the desert in the hope of finding some holy hermit, one day saw before him a strange being, with a naked body all blackened and burned by the sun. The creature took flight at once, and Zosimas pursued with all the speed of his limbs. Then the fugitive said to him: 'Abbot Zosimas, why dost thou pursue me? Forgive me that I cannot turn my face to thee; but I am a woman and unclothed! Throw me thy mantle, that I may cover myself, and bear thy gaze without shame!' The abbot, astonished to hear himself called by his name, threw her his mantle, and prostrated himself before her, begging her to bless him. But she said: 'It is for thee, my father, to bless me, since thou art invested with the priestly dignity!' And Zosimas, even more surprised to see that she knew not only his name but his priestly character, pleaded the more insistently for her blessing. Then she said: 'Blessed be God, the Saviour of our souls!' And while she prayed, with her hands outstretched, he saw her lifted above the earth to the height of a cubit. At this a doubt came into the old abbot's soul, and he wondered if this might not be a spirit, pretending to pray in order to delude him. But she said: 'May God forgive thee, abbot, for mistaking a poor sinful woman for an evil spirit!' Zosimas then adjured her in the name of the Lord, to tell him who she was. 'Father,' she answered, 'forgive me: but if I tell thee who I am, thou wilt flee in terror as if thou hadst seen a serpent, and thine



ears will be defiled by my words, and the air infected with my uncleanness!’ But Zosimas pressed his demand, and finally she said to him: ‘Know, brother, that I was born in Egypt. I came to Alexandria at the age of twelve, and lived for seventeen years as a public woman, selling my body to any that wanted it. But one day when the people of the city were setting out to adore the holy Cross at Jerusalem, I asked the seamen to allow me to embark with them. They asked me if I had money to pay; and I answered that I had no money, but that I would offer them my body to pay for the passage. Thus I was taken aboard, and they had my body as the price. When we came to Jerusalem, and I approached the doors of the church with the other pilgrims, I felt myself held back by an unseen force, which stayed me from entering. A score of times I made my way to the door; a score of times the same force arrested me. All the others went in freely, nor did anything hinder them. Then, taking thought with myself, I recognized that all this was the result of my sinful life; and I began to tear at my breast, to shed bitter tears, and to grieve from the bottom of my heart. Then I saw an image of the Blessed Virgin Mary on the wall, and entreated her to obtain pardon for my sins, and permission to go into the church and adore the holy Cross; and I promised in return to renounce the world and to live thenceforward in chastity. This prayer renewed my confidence, and again I went up to the doors of the church; and this time I was able to enter without the least hindrance. And while I knelt before the Cross, a stranger gave me three pieces of silver, with which I bought three loaves. And I heard a voice saying to me: “Go beyond the Jordan, and thou shalt find salvation!” I crossed the Jordan, therefore, and came into the desert, and here I have dwelt for forty-seven years without seeing a human being, and living from the three loaves which I brought with me, and which, albeit they have become as hard as stone, still suffice to feed me. As for my garments, they long since rotted from my body. And during the first seventeen years of my life in the desert, I was tormented by the cravings of the flesh; but now, by the grace of God, I have conquered them all. This is my story. I have told it to thee, that thou mayest deign to pray God for me!’

Thereupon the old man prostrated himself on the earth, and blessed the Lord in the person of His handmaid. But she said to

him: 'Give heed to what I ask of thee! It is to come across the Jordan again on Easter morning, and to bring with thee a consecrated Host. I shall await thee on the shore, and shall receive from thy hands the Body of the Lord, for I have not received the Communion of the Lord since the day I came here!' The abbot then returned to his monastery, and the following year, on Holy Thursday, he came back to the bank of the Jordan, bearing the Host with him. And he saw the woman standing on the other bank. And at once, making the sign of the cross over the water, she set out across it on foot, and so came to the abbot. Wondering at this miracle, he thought to cast himself at her feet. But she said to him: 'Father, think not to kneel to me, now in especial that thou art the bearer of the Body of Christ; vouchsafe only to come again a year hence!' Then, having received the Sacrament, she again made the sign of the cross, and walked over the waters to the other side.

The following year Zosimas went to the place where he had seen her the first time: and there he found her, dead, stretched out upon the sand. He burst into tears, and durst not touch her remains, but said within himself: 'I would wish to bury the little body of the saint, but I fear lest I displease her!' But while he pondered over a means of interring the body, his eye fell upon an inscription in the sand: 'Zosimas, bury my body, give back my dust to the earth, and pray for me to the Lord, at Whose command I am at last delivered from this world, the second day of April!' Thus the old man discovered that she had died almost immediately after she had received the holy Communion; and although he had taken thirty days to complete the journey with much difficulty, she had accomplished it in an hour, and departed to God. And as he was becoming exhausted with his efforts to dig a grave, he saw a lion coming toward him in all mildness. And he said to the lion: 'This holy woman has ordered me to bury her body but, old as I am, and being without a spade, I cannot dig the grave. Do thou be kind to hollow out a grave, so that we may give burial to the sacred body of Mary the Egyptian!' And straightway the lion busied himself and dug a large grave, and then went off, gentle as a lamb; and the old man set out to return to his monastery, glorifying God.

## SAINT LEO

APRIL 11

One day while Saint Leo offered the Mass in the church of Saint Mary Major, and was giving Communion to the faithful in the customary manner, a woman kissed his hand, and aroused in him a violent temptation of the flesh. But the man of God, punishing himself more severely than any other judge would have done, secretly cut off the hand which had scandalized him. In time the populace murmured because the sovereign pontiff did not celebrate the divine office as of yore. Then Leo had recourse to the Blessed Virgin, entrusting himself wholly to her care. And she appeared to him at once, and with her holy hands restored his hand to him, commanding him to proceed with the Holy Sacrifice. And Leo made known to the people all that had befallen him, showing to all the hand which had been miraculously restored.

This Pope Leo presided over the Council of Chalcedon, in which it was decreed that virgins alone could take the veil, and furthermore that thenceforth the Blessed Virgin Mary should be called by the title of *Mother of God*.

When Attila was laying waste the land of Italy, Saint Leo prayed for three days and three nights in the church of the Apostles, and then said to his company: 'Follow me who will!' And as soon as Attila saw him approaching, he got down from his horse, fell at the pope's feet, and told him to ask what he would. Leo asked him to leave Italy at once, and to set free all his captives; and he straightway complied. And when Attila's comrades reproached him that he, the conqueror of the world, had allowed himself to be conquered by a priest, the barbarian replied: 'I have acted for my good and for yours; for at the right side of this man I saw a giant warrior, sword in hand, who said to me: "Unless thou obey this priest, thou and thine shall perish!"'

Pope Leo wrote to Fabian, bishop of Constantinople, a letter against Eutyches and Nestorius; and he laid the letter upon the tomb of Saint Peter, praying thus to the saint: 'Do thou, guardian of the Church, correct and amend all that in which I, as a man, have erred in this letter!' And forty days later Saint Peter appeared to him and said: 'I have read and amended!' And when Leo took up his

letter, he found it corrected and amended by the hand of Saint Peter.

Another time, Saint Leo passed forty days in fasting and praying at Saint Peter's tomb, in order to obtain pardon of his sins. And Saint Peter appeared to him and said: 'I have prayed the Lord for thee, and He has taken away all thy sins. Thou must answer for the laying on of hands: that is, thou shalt be asked whether thou hast worthily or otherwise, laid hands on anyone.'

Saint Leo died about the year of the Lord 460.

## SAINT GEORGE

APRIL 23

George comes from *geos*, earth, and *orge*, to work, that is, one who works the earth, namely, his own flesh. But Saint Augustine writes in his book *Of the Holy Trinity*, that good earth is found on the summit of mountains, on the hills, and in the plains; the first bears good grass, the second, grapes, and the third, the fruits of the fields. So too, Saint George was on the heights, for he disdained base things and had the fresh green of purity; he was temperate by his prudence, and thus was permitted to share in the wine of heavenly joy; he was lowly in his humility, and therefore was clothed with the fruits of good deeds. Or, George comes from *gerar*, holy, and *gyon*, battle, a holy warrior, for he fought with the dragon and with the executioner. Or, George comes from *gerar*, sacred, and *gyon*, sand, holy sand. He was like unto sand for he was heavy through his great virtue; ground small through his humility; dry, in his abstinence from the temptations of the flesh. Or, George comes from *gero*, pilgrim, *gir*, precious, and *ys*, counsellor: for he was a pilgrim in his contempt for the world, precious because of his crown of martyrdom, a counsellor in his preaching of the Kingdom. At the Council of Nicæa, his legend was placed among the apocryphal books, for there was no certain account of his martyrdom. In the *Calendar* of the Venerable Bede we read that he was martyred in Persia in the city of Diospolis; elsewhere it is said that he is buried in Diospolis, formerly called Lidda, near Joppe. We also read that he suffered under Diocletian and Maximian, the emperors; or, under

the Persian emperor Dacianus in the presence of seventy of his kings. Here we read how he was tortured by the prefect Dacianus under the emperors Diocletian and Maximian.

George was a native of Cappadocia, and served in the Roman army, with the rank of tribune. A chance journey took him one day into the neighbourhood of Silena, a town in the province of Libya. In this town, in a deep lake as large as an ocean, there dwelt a horrible dragon, who many times had put to flight the men who came armed against him, and who was wont to prowl about the city walls, poisoning all who came within the reach of his breath. In order to appease the fury of this monster, and to keep him from destroying the whole town, the burgesses had been offering him two sheep every day. But in time the number of sheep was so depleted that they were reduced to abandoning to him one sheep and one human being. The name of a youth or a maiden was drawn in a lottery, and no family was exempt from this lottery. And the day that Saint George reached the city, well-nigh all the young folk of the town had already been eaten up, and the lot for that day had fallen upon the only daughter of the king. Then this aged man, in the slough of his despair, had said: 'Take ye my gold and my silver, and the half of my kingdom, but give back my daughter, that she may be spared so dreadful a death!' But his people were exceeding wroth, and cried: 'Thou thyself, O King, hast uttered this decree; and now when on its account all our children have perished, thou wouldst save thine own daughter from the law! No! Let her perish like the rest, or else we shall burn thee alive, with all thy house!' At these words the king burst into tears, and said to his daughter: 'Alas, sweet child, what shall I do for thee? And shall it not be given to me to see thy wedding day?' And after this, seeing that he still could not secure the safety of his daughter, he said to her: 'Alas, sweet daughter, I hoped to see kingly children feeding at thy breasts, and now thou thyself must leave me, to be fodder for this horrid dragon! Alas, alas, my sweet child, I hoped to invite all the nobles of the land to thy wedding, and to adorn my palace with pearls, and to hear the joyous music of trumpets and tambours; and now instead must I despatch thee to the dragon to be devoured!' And he dismissed her with a last word: 'Woe is me, my daughter, that I did not die before this day!' The damsel fell at her father's feet to

receive his blessing; and then, quitting the town, she walked toward the lake where the dragon dwelt.

Saint George, passing that way, saw her all in tears, and asked her the cause of her trouble. And she replied: 'Good youth, get to horse and away with all speed, lest thou die the same death that awaits me!' 'Fear not, my child,' answered Saint George, 'but tell me wherefore thou weepest, beneath the eyes of the crowd that is gathered yonder upon the walls!' But she made answer: 'Gentle youth, I see that thou hast a great heart, and art minded to die with me: but I beg of thee, be off in all haste!' 'Not a step shall I take,' said Saint George, 'before I know what ails thee!' At this the damsel told him the whole tale, and Saint George said: 'My child, be without fear; for in the name of Christ I will succour thee!' But again she pleaded: 'Brave knight, make haste to save thyself, lest thou likewise come to naught! Suffice it that I die!'

While they were in speech, the dragon reared his head out of the lake. All atremble, the maiden cried: 'Away, sweet lord, away with all speed!' But George, mounting his horse and arming himself with the sign of the cross, set bravely upon the dragon as he came toward him; and with a prayer to God he brandished his sword, and dealt the monster a hurt that threw him to the ground. And the saint said to the damsel: 'Fear naught, my child, and throw thy girdle about the dragon's neck!' Thus she did, and the dragon, setting himself erect, followed her like a little dog on a leash.

But when the people of the city saw him drawing near, they fled in panic up to the hills and into the caves, certain that they were all about to be devoured. Saint George signed to them to come back, and said to them: 'Ye have naught to fear, for the Lord has appointed me to deliver you from the crimes of this monster! Believe in Christ, be baptized, and I shall slay the beast that persecuted you!' Then the king and all his people were baptized; on that day twenty thousand men, and a multitude of women and children, received baptism. And Saint George, drawing his sword, slew the dragon, who was carried out of the city upon a car drawn by four yoke of oxen. And the king caused a great church to be built in honour of the Blessed Virgin and Saint George, and from within there flowed a spring whose waters cured all languors. And the king offered a very large sum of money to Saint George; but he, taking nothing for himself, gave all to the poor. And then he taught the king four

things. He taught him to care for the church of God, to honour the priests, to assist with devotion at the divine office, and to have the poor always in mind. And at last he embraced the aged king and took leave of him.

Other authors, however, tell this story in a different way. They say at the very moment when the dragon drew nigh to devour the maiden, Saint George, making the sign of the cross, set upon him and slew him with one blow.

At this time, in the reign of Diocletian and Maximian, the prefect Dacian loosed against the Christians a persecution so violent that within a month seventeen thousand had won the crown of martyrdom, while others, weary of their torments, yielded and consented to worship the idols. Seeing this, Saint George, beside himself with grief, forsook all his goods, laid aside his soldier's trappings for the garb of the Christians, and rushed into the public square, crying: 'All your gods are but demons, and our God alone is the Creator of the heavens and the earth!' In a rage, the prefect challenged him: 'How darest thou, rash fellow, to blaspheme against our gods? Who art thou, and whence?' Saint George answered: 'I am called George, I come of a noble family of Cappadocia, and with the help of my God I have followed the wars in Palestine; but now I have abandoned all to serve the God of Heaven more freely!' Then the prefect, not availing to daunt him, had him stretched upon a rack, and ordered his members to be torn, one after the other, with iron hooks. His body was likewise burnt with lighted torches, and the wounds from out of which his vitals started were rubbed with salt. But in the night that followed, Our Lord appeared to Saint George in the midst of a great light, and so sweetly comforted him with His presence and His words that all his hurts were assuaged. And when Dacian saw that tortures had no power over him, he sent for his magician, and said to him: 'These Christians have some witchery which allays their torments and gives them indomitable strength of will.' And the magician answered: 'If I fail to conquer George's spells, I agree that thou mayest put me to death!' Thereupon, after invoking his gods, he poured poison into a cup of wine, and gave it to George to drink; but he made the sign of the cross and drank, and suffered no ill. The sorcerer then put a stronger dose of poison into the wine: and again the saint made the sign of the cross, drank, and suffered no ill. Seeing which, the magician fell down before his

feet, tearfully sued for his forgiveness, and asked to become a Christian: and within a short time the prefect had him beheaded. Saint George was then bound to a wheel which was fitted on all sides with two-edged swords; but the wheel fell apart at the first turn, and Saint George remained unharmed. Dacian then commanded that he be plunged into a cauldron of molten lead; but he made the sign of the cross, and felt no more than the touch of a soothing bath.

Then Dacian, perceiving how unavailing threats and tortures were, thought to weaken him by flattery, and said to him: 'Thou seest, my good George, how long-suffering are our gods, that they bear patiently with thy blasphemies, and yet are ready to visit thee with their favour at the first sign of repentance! Follow my counsel, then, brave youth! Have done with thy superstition, and offer sacrifice to our gods, that thou mayest have great rewards of them and of us!' And Saint George smiled, and said: 'Ah! Why didst thou not speak thus to me in the beginning, instead of seeking to overcome me with torments? So be it! I am ready to obey thy counsels!' Dacian, delighted with this promise, had the trumpets sounded, and proclaimed that all the people were to gather at the temple, where George, after long resistance, was about to worship the gods. The whole city was garlanded as for a festival, and thousands of people milled about the temple. And George, the moment he entered therein, knelt and prayed to God to destroy the temple and its idols forthwith. And instantly a fire fell from Heaven and consumed the temple, the idols, and the priests; and the earth opened and swallowed up the remains.

Saint Ambrose makes reference to this miracle when he says: 'At a time when Christianity was a hidden thing, George, the staunch soldier of Christ, alone dared to profess his faith in the Son of God before all the people. And the grace of God, in return, gave him such fortitude that he braved a thousand menaces and a thousand tortures. O blessed and venerable warrior of God! And not only would he not be cozened by the proffer of earthly power, but, making game of his persecutor, he destroyed the temple with all its false gods!' Thus spoke Ambrose.

In this circumstance, Dacian again confronted George, and said to him: 'By what arts, miscreant, hast thou dared to commit such a crime?' And George retorted: 'O King, thou art mistaken! Come with me to another temple, and in thy sight I shall worship the



idols!' 'Ha!' he replied, 'I divine thy ruse! Thou wouldst put an end to me, as thou hast done already to my temple and my gods!' 'But, miserable man,' said George, 'if thy gods are powerless to help themselves, how can they help others?' Beside himself with anger, Dacian said to his wife: 'I shall die of discomfiture, for this man is stronger than I!' But she responded: 'Bloody tyrant, did I not conjure thee to persecute the Christians no more, because their God fought at their side? Know now that I too am about to become a Christian!' Astounded, Dacian cried: 'What! Even thou hast fallen under their spell!' And he had her hung by the hair and beaten with rods. And while they were beating her, she said to George: 'George, what thinkest thou will become of me, who am about to die without being reborn in the waters of baptism?' And George made answer: 'Doubt not, my daughter, that the outpouring of thy blood will be thy Baptism, and will merit thee eternal glory!' Then Alexandria, having besought the Lord, breathed her last.

This is attested by Saint Ambrose in his *Preface*, who adds: 'For this reason, the queen of the pagan Persians was also shown mercy and received the palm of martyrdom when her cruel husband had condemned her to death, although she had not yet been baptized; we may not doubt that she, crimson with the dew of her blood, was permitted to enter the portal of Heaven, and to possess eternal glory.'

The next day Dacian commanded George to be dragged through the length and breadth of the city, and then beheaded. And the saint prayed to God that whoever should implore his help might have his vow fulfilled; and a heavenly voice was heard saying that this prayer was granted. Then, his prayer finished, Saint George was beheaded. This occurred in the year 287. As for Dacian, as he was leaving the place of execution to return to his palace, the fire of Heaven fell upon him and consumed him and his ministers.

Gregory of Tours relates that certain monks were bearing with them the relics of Saint George, when they halted before a certain chapel; and they could not lift the casket containing the relics until they had deposited some of them in this chapel.

We read in the *History of Antioch* that during the Crusades, when the Christian hosts were about to lay siege to Jerusalem, a passing fair young man appeared to a priest. He told him that he was

Saint George, the captain of the Christian armies; and that if the crusaders carried his relics to Jerusalem, he would be with them. And when the Crusaders, during the siege of Jerusalem, feared to scale the walls because of the Saracens who were mounted thereon, Saint George appeared to them, accoutred in white armour adorned with the red cross. He signed to them to follow him without fear in the assault of the walls: and they, encouraged by his leadership, repulsed the Saracens and took the city.

## SAINT MARK THE EVANGELIST

APRIL 25

Mark means high in the commandment, sure, bent down, and bitter. He was high in the way of the commandments, because of the perfection of his life, for he not only observed the common precepts, but the counsels as well. He was sure because of his teaching; for he handed down to us his gospel as he had heard it from Peter his master. He is called bent down because of his great humility, for in his self-abasement he cut off his thumb so that he would not be fit for the office of priest. He is called bitter because of the bitterness of his tortures; for he was dragged throughout the entire city before giving up the ghost. Or, Mark comes from *marco*, a heavy hammer: it forges the iron, strengthens the anvil, and makes the blow to ring out at one and the same time. So, with the sole teaching of his gospel, Mark struck down the evil of the heretics, strengthened the Church, and permitted the praise of God to ring out.

Mark was of the tribe of Levi, and carried on the priestly office. He was baptized by Saint Peter and instructed by him in the Christian faith, and then accompanied him to Rome. And there, as Peter was preaching the gospel, the Christians of Rome besought Mark to write down the life of the Saviour, so that they might have a lasting memorial of it. Mark therefore faithfully wrote down the account as he heard it from Peter's lips; and when Peter himself had examined the work and deemed it exact in all things, he approved it for use by all the faithful.

Then, seeing Mark's constancy in the faith, Peter sent him to

Aquileja, where by his preaching he converted great multitudes to the faith, and where a manuscript of his gospel, believed to have been written by his own hand, is still piously preserved. Finally Saint Mark, having finished his work in Aquileja, came back to Rome, bringing with him a citizen of Aquileja named Hermagoras, whom he had converted; and he commended this man to Peter, who ordained him bishop of his native city. Thenceforth Hermagoras ruled over his diocese in exemplary fashion, until the day when he was taken by the infidels, and crowned with the glorious crown of martyrdom.

Peter next sent Mark to Alexandria, where he was the first to preach the word of God. The learned Jew Philo himself testifies that from the time of Mark's arrival in Alexandria, a multitude of men were united in faith and in continence. Papias, the bishop of Hieropolis, gives us the substance of many of his sermons. And Peter Damian says of him: 'God bestowed such grace upon him that from the moment of his coming to Alexandria, all those whom he converted attained at once to an almost monastic perfection of life, to which he himself inspired them not only by his miracles, but also by the faultless innocence of his own life. And God likewise permitted him to come back to Italy after his death, so that the land wherein he wrote his gospel has the honour of guarding his relics. Rejoice, O blessed Alexandria, purpled with his triumphant blood! Rejoice, O blessed Italy, enriched with his remains!'

So great was Mark's humility that he cut off his thumb, so that according to man-made law he could not be ordained a priest; but Saint Peter's command and authority prevailed, and he was consecrated bishop of Alexandria. We are told that as he entered this city his boot came apart, and he gave it to a cobbler whom he chanced to meet, that it might be repaired. And the cobbler, while he was working over the boot, wounded himself grievously in the left hand, and exclaimed: 'Ah, one and only God!' Hearing this, Saint Mark said: 'Truly doth the Lord bless my path!' Then he made clay of his spittle, and spread the clay upon the cobbler's hand, and instantly it was healed. Astonished at his power, the man brought him into his house, and began to ask him who he was and whence he came. Saint Mark answered that he was the servant of Jesus Christ. The cobbler said: 'Well would it please me to see your Master!' 'Then I shall have you to see Him!' said Saint Mark.

Then he began to expound the Gospel to him, and baptized him with his whole household. But soon the men of the city, learning of the arrival of a Galilean who contemned their gods, spread snares for him; and when he learned of this, he took the man whom he had healed (and whose name was Annianus), and made him bishop in his place, and then went off to Pentapolis, where he stayed for two years. He then returned to Alexandria, where he had constructed a church on the shore of the sea, at a place called Bucculi; and he found that the number of the faithful had grown apace. But the priests of the false gods recommenced their efforts to lay hold of him. And on Easter day, while he was celebrating the Mass, they surrounded him, and threw a rope around his neck, and dragged him through the streets of the city, saying: 'We are dragging the ox to Bucculi,' which means, an abattoir. His flesh hung from him in shreds, and the pavement was red with his blood. In the gaol wherein he was later immured, he was consoled by the angels; and Our Lord Jesus Christ also deigned to come to him, and said: 'Peace be to thee, Mark, My evangelist! Fear naught, for I am at thy side to defend thee!' On the morrow he was again dragged through the town with a rope around his neck. But at the moment when he pronounced the words *in manus tuas commendo spiritum meum*, he surrendered his soul to the Lord. All this occurred under Nero, who began to reign in the year 57.

And when the pagans set about to burn the martyr's body, of a sudden a great wind blew, hail beat down, the thunder roared, the lightning flashed, and all were forced to flee to cover, leaving the body of Saint Mark untouched; and the Christians made haste to carry it away, and buried it piously in his church.

Saint Mark had a long nose, heavy eyebrows, fine eyes, and a thick beard. He was of medium height, and bore himself nobly. He was about fifty years old when he underwent martyrdom. His miraculous cure of the cobbler's hand was commemorated by Saint Ambrose.

In the year of the Lord 468, in the reign of the Emperor Leo, the Venetians transported the body of Saint Mark from Alexandria to Venice, where a church of marvellous beauty was built in honour of the saint. This came about as follows: certain Venetian merchants, by supplications and promises of reward, persuaded the priests whose duty it was to guard the body to let them carry it off

secretly and bring it to Venice. But when they lifted the stone from the tomb, so strong a perfume spread throughout the city of Alexandria that everybody wondered whence this sweet odour might come. And when, in the course of the voyage, the merchants told the crew of another ship whose body it was that they carried, some of these men said to them: 'Mayhap the Egyptians deceived you, and gave you another body than that of Saint Mark!' And at this the ship which bore the holy body turned upon the other vessel, bore down upon it, breached its broadside, and would have sunken it had not the whole crew hastened to proclaim that the body was indeed that of Saint Mark. Another time the pilot lost his way in the night, and knew not where he was; and Saint Mark appeared to the monk who stood guard over his body, and said to him: 'Go say to the seamen to haul down their sails at once, to slacken the coursing of the ship, for the land is hard by!' The monks did as they were bidden, and well it was for them; for in the morning, at the crack of dawn, they saw that they had come alongside an island, upon which, but for Saint Mark's protection, they would have dashed their barque. And wherever the vessel dropped anchor, the people, without having heard aught of the treasure it bore, came running, and cried out: 'Oh, fortunate are you to bear the body of Saint Mark! Allow us to worship it devoutly!' But in the ship there was one mariner who still did not believe; but the Devil took possession of him, and tortured him until, when brought into the presence of the body, he declared that he believed. And from that moment he had an especial devotion and love for Saint Mark.

In Venice the saint's body was placed beneath one of the marble columns of the church; and only a small number of persons was allowed to know the location, so that it might be the more easily guarded. But in time these persons died, and it was found that no one knew where the sacred body lay; and all the searchings that were made to discover it were unavailing. Great was the sorrow of layman and clerk alike. The populace trembled to think that perhaps its holy patron had been spirited away. A solemn fast was inaugurated, and a procession wound in great pomp through all the streets of Venice. And of a sudden, in the sight of all and to their great wonderment, the stones of one of the columns gave way and fell, revealing the vault where the body was hidden. In transports of joy, the whole city offered thanks to God for this great miracle,

and the anniversary of that day has since been celebrated in Venice with solemn rites.

A young man whose chest was eaten away by a cancer implored the help of Saint Mark. The following night, in a dream, he saw a pilgrim hurrying with rapid steps along a road. The young man asked him who he was and whither he went in such haste, and the pilgrim replied that he was Saint Mark, and that he was speeding to the rescue of a ship in danger; and then, stretching forth his hand, he touched the sick man, who awakened entirely cured. And shortly afterwards, a vessel made port at Venice, and the crew related that, being in peril of their lives, they had called upon Saint Mark, and he had saved them. And all thanked God for this twofold miracle and praised Him in Mark, His saint.

Certain Venetian merchants were on their way to Alexandria in a vessel which belonged to the Saracens. A tempest arose, and the merchants leapt into a small boat; and at the very moment when they put off from the ship, it foundered in the waves, carrying with it all the Saracens. A single one among them, seeing that he was about to perish, invoked Saint Mark, and vowed that if he were saved, he would be baptized in the saint's church. At this a stranger appeared to him, clothed, as it were, in light, and drawing him out of the sea, lodged him in the boat with the Venetians. But when he came to Alexandria, the man forgot his miraculous deliverance, and the vow which he had made in return. But Saint Mark again appeared to him, and put him to shame for his thanklessness, so that the Saracen, filled with confusion, set out for Venice, and there took the name of Mark at his Baptism; and thereafter he abode in the faith of Christ, and ended his days in good works.

A man who was working at the top of the belfry of Saint Mark's church in Venice lost his footing and began to fall; but he called upon Saint Mark as he fell, and was able to hold to a beam which stood out before him. From there he made his way down by means of a rope which was thrown to him, and then went back to complete his work.

A faithful Christian who was in the service of a noble of Provence made a vow to visit the tomb of Saint Mark, but was unable to get his master's leave to go in pilgrimage to Venice. At last, putting his fear of the judgement of Heaven ahead of his fear of bodily punishment, he set out without asking permission, and went to pray at

the saint's tomb. When he returned, his master, much angered, ordered him to have his eyes put out. At once the slaves, more cruel than their lord, stretched their pious comrade upon the ground, and set about the task of gouging out his eyes with wooden stakes. But their fury was of no avail, because the points broke when they touched his eyes. Then the master commanded the poor man's limbs to be broken with hatchet-blows; but the iron of the axes softened and turned to lead. Next the master ordered his teeth to be smashed with iron hammers. But again the iron forgot its strength and softened, as if dulled by the power of God. Seeing all this, the master was overcome with astonishment. He repented, begged forgiveness of the slave, and went with him to pray at the tomb of Saint Mark.

A soldier had his arm so gravely wounded in battle that the hand was almost severed. Physicians and friends counselled him to have it cut off; but he held back, fearing to be maimed, for he was reputed right agile of hand. In the end he asked that his hand be put in place and bound about with cloths; after which he called upon the assistance of Saint Mark, and instantly his hand regained its former soundness. There remained only a scar which never disappeared, so as to bear witness to the wondrous miracle.

A citizen of Mantua had been falsely accused by wicked men, and was imprisoned. When forty days had passed, his confinement being heavy upon him, he fasted for three days, and then invoked the aid of Saint Mark. At once the saint appeared to him, and told him to walk out of the prison. But the man, thinking this impossible, dismissed the vision as a dream. The saint appeared a second and a third time, renewing his command. Then the prisoner, perceiving that his cell door was open, broke his chains as though they were made of tow, walked forth from the gaol, passing in broad daylight through the midst of his warders and the other folk of the city; and none of them could so much as see him, although he could see them. Thus he made his way to Venice, where he hastened to the tomb of Saint Mark, and there offered devout thanksgiving in fulfilment of his vow.

At one time there came a dearth over all the land of Apulia, and no rain fell to water the earth and make it fruitful. And it was learned that this calamity had befallen because the people did not celebrate the feast of Saint Mark. They made haste therefore to

offer prayers to the saint, and promised that they would honour his feast-day with all solemnity; and immediately Saint Mark dispelled the drought, and brought to them pure air and the rain for which they longed.

About the year of Our Lord 1241, in the Dominican convent in Pavia, a brother, Julianus of Faenza, lay at death's door; he was pure of body and spirit, young in years, but old in wisdom. As he lay thus, he asked of the prior how things were with him, and the prior replied that he was close to death. This news caused him great rejoicing and he made this manifest with his hands and his whole body, calling out: 'Make room, brothers, so great is my joy that my soul will burst the confines of my body, having heard such good news.' Stretching forth his hands towards Heaven, he said: '*Educ de carcere animam meam*,' which means, Lord, lead my soul out of prison, that I may praise Thy name; poor wretch that I am, who will free me from the body of this death? In the meantime, he had fallen into a light slumber. And he saw Saint Mark approach and stand beside him, and heard a voice saying, 'What dost thou here, O Marcus?' Saint Mark replied: 'I have come to this dying man, for his services were pleasing to God.' And again the voice spoke: 'Why didst thou, of all the saints, come to him?' He replied: 'Because he was close to me, and often visited the place where my body rests; and for this reason I have come to aid him in this hour.' And then many came, clothed in white, and filled the entire house. And Mark said to them: 'Why have you come here?' They replied: 'That we may lead his soul into the presence of the Lord.' And the sick man awoke, summoned the prior and related all to him, and the story was told me by the prior himself. Soon after, the man fell asleep rejoicing in the Lord.

## SAINT MARCELLINUS

APRIL 26

Pope Saint Marcellinus governed the church of Rome for nine years and four months. At the order of Diocletian and Maximian, he was arrested and enjoined to offer sacrifice to the idols. At first he refused; but when he was threatened with divers tortures, the



fear of suffering made him consent to sacrifice two grains of incense on the altar. Great was the joy of the infidels, and greater still the sorrow of the faithful. These came in large numbers to Marcellinus, and reproached him with his lack of courage; and Marcellinus, overwhelmed with confusion, asked to be judged by an assembly of the bishops. But the bishops made answer: 'As sovereign pontiff, no man on earth can be thy judge; but enter into thyself, and pronounce thine own judgement!' Then Marcellinus, stricken with remorse and weeping bitterly, abdicated the papal office; but the multitude at once reëlected him. When the emperors learned of this, they commanded that he be taken into custody once more. And when he firmly refused to offer sacrifice to the gods, they ordered him to be beheaded: and after this was done, their rage waxed to such a point that in one month they put to death seventeen thousand Christians.

Marcellinus had deemed himself unworthy of Christian burial, and had decreed, before his death, that any who should attempt to bury him would be excommunicated. Thus his body remained unburied for thirty-five days. But at the end of this time, Saint Peter appeared to his successor, Pope Marcellus, and said to him: 'Brother Marcellus, wherefore dost thou keep me so long without burial?' And Marcellus answered: 'But, Master, art thou not buried long since?' To this the apostle replied: 'As long as I shall see Marcellinus deprived of sepulture, I shall hold myself to be unburied.' But the pope protested: 'But, Master, knowest thou not that he laid an excommunication on all those who should take it in mind to bury him?' And Saint Peter responded: 'Knowest thou not that it is written that he who humbles himself shall be exalted? Go straight, and lay Marcellinus to rest at the foot of my tomb!' And this the pope did, in obedience to the apostle's command.

## SAINT VITALIS

APRIL 28

Vitalis comes from *vivens talis*, one who lives correctly; for as he lived outwardly in his works, so too was he pious in his heart. Or, it comes from *vita*, life. Or, perhaps it comes from *vivens alis*, he who shields himself with the wings of virtue. For he was like one

of the animals of God which Ezechiel saw, having four wings: the wing of hope with which he flew to Heaven; the wing of love, with which he flew to God; the wing of fear, with which he flew to Hell; and the wing of knowledge, with which he flew into himself. The suffering of Saint Vitalis was written in the book of Saints Gervasius and Protasius, or so it is believed.

Saint Vitalis, a knight of consular rank, was the father of Saints Gervasius and Protasius. Entering the town of Ravenna one day in the company of a judge named Paulinus, he came upon the execution of a Christian physician called Urcisinus; and this man, already sorely tried by divers torments, appeared to be weakening from terror. Saint Vitalis cried out to him: 'Holla, dear brother, in the past thou hast cured others! Beware thou die not the eternal death, and lose not the crown which God has prepared unto thee!' At these words Urcisinus regained courage, and joyously accepted martyrdom; and Saint Vitalis, after he had buried the martyr with all Christian charity, refused to rejoin his master Paulinus. Much wroth, Paulinus had him stretched on a rack. And Vitalis said to him: 'How canst thou hope, senseless man, to turn me against my faith, when I have already deterred so many others from turning against it?' And Paulinus said to his henchmen: 'Bring him to the temple, and if he will not offer sacrifice to the gods, dig a very deep hole, until ye find water, and bury him alive, head downwards. This they did, and thus was Saint Vitalis buried alive, in the reign of the Emperor Nero in the year 57. But the pagan priest who had suggested this manner of death to the judges, fell at once into the power of the demon. For seven days he writhed in frenzy upon the spot where his victim was buried, crying: 'Thou burnest me, Vitalis!' And on the seventh day the Devil cast him into the river, and he perished miserably.

Valeria, the wife of Saint Vitalis, was on her way to Milan when she came upon a number of pagans who were offering sacrifice to the idols; and these sought to compel her to partake of the food offered up in their worship. But she answered: 'Know ye that I am a Christian, and may not join in your rites!' Thereupon these men set upon her, and beat her so rudely that her servitors carried her to Milan half dead; and three days later her soul departed joyously to Heaven.

## SAINT PETER MARTYR

APRIL 29

Peter is translated as one who knows; or one who takes off his shoes; or, it comes from *petros*, strong. In these, we note three privileges which were in Saint Peter. Firstly, he was an incomparable preacher, and that is why he is called one who knows, for he had a perfect knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, and knew how to suit his preaching to every hearer. Secondly, he was of virginal purity, and that is why he is called one who takes off his shoes; for he drew off all earthly love from the feet of his desires as one would take off a shoe, so that he remained virginal in spirit as well as in body. Thirdly, he was a glorious martyr of the Lord, and that is why he is called the strong, for he steadfastly endured all suffering in championing the faith.

Peter the New, also called Peter Martyr, of the Order of Preachers, was born in the city of Verona. As a brilliant light might flash from out a cloud of smoke, or a white lily rear itself among brambles, or a rose bloom among thorns, so this great confessor of the faith was born of parents who were blinded by error. For both his father and his mother belonged to an heretical sect, from which he, however, even in childhood, held himself apart.

He was seven years of age, and was coming home from school one day, when his uncle, a heretic like his parents, asked him what his masters taught him. The child answered that they taught him to say: 'I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth. . . .' Then his uncle said: 'Do not say that God is the Creator of Heaven and earth, for not God, but the Devil, has made all things that the eye can see!' But the child responded that he would rather say what he had learned at school, and believe what he had read in the sacred books. In vain did his uncle seek to persuade him, quoting the testimony of all the authorities of his sect; for the boy, filled with the Holy Ghost, turned all his arguments back upon him, striking him thus with his own weapon, and leaving him no avenue of escape. The uncle, angry at being confounded by a child, complained thereof to Peter's father, demanding that the boy be taken forthwith from the school where he was a pupil. 'I fear me,' he said, 'that young Peter, once he has finished his studies, may

well rally to the harlot Church of Rome, and thus help to demean and destroy our faith.' Herein the heretic, all unknown to himself, proved to be a second Caiphas, for Peter was indeed destined to destroy the perfidy of the heretics. But God so disposed that the father refused to follow his brother's counsel, saying that he could always bring his son back to the teachings of their sect when he had completed his schooling. But the boy, deeming that 'twas a perilous thing to dwell among scorpions, and contemning the world and hating the error of his parents, made haste to enter the Order of Preachers as soon as he left school.

Pope Innocent, in his epistle, tells us in this regard: 'Renouncing the falsehoods of the world at an early age, the blessed Peter joined the Order of Preachers. Therein he lived for wellnigh thirty years in great virtue. Faith led him on, hope was ever at his side, compassion was always with him; in this, he became so strong and eager in his championing of the faith with which his whole soul was enflamed, that he constantly combated the enemies of that faith ardently and without fear, until he achieved the eternal victory of martyrdom. And so Peter, firmly anchored on the rock of faith, was finally dashed to pieces on the rock of suffering, so that he might arise to the rock of Christ, and receive the crown of glory. Throughout his life, moreover, he preserved without blemish the virginity of his body and his soul, and never suffered the wound of a mortal sin, as his confessors have attested. And because a servant who is too well-fed becomes insolent towards his master, throughout his life Peter subdued his body by abstaining from all excess of eating and drinking. And for fear that he might fall into the snares of the enemy through idleness, he never for a moment ceased to guard his faith. During the night, in which it is ordained that man should rest, after a brief repose he arose and passed the hours in watching, and in studying the Lessons. And he spent his days preaching against the temptations of the world, or hearing confessions, or refuting with subtile reasoning the poisonous doctrines of the heretics; and we know how well he succeeded in these refutations, with the aid of God. Pious, humble, gentle, obedient, patient, filled with charity and compassion, he drew all hearts after him by the sweet odour of his virtues. And in the ardour of his faith, he entreated the Lord to allow him to drink of the chalice of His Passion before He took him from this world: and in the end his prayer was granted.'

Many were the miracles which he wrought in his lifetime.

One day in Milan he was questioning an heretical bishop whom the faithful had taken prisoner, and a great crowd of bishops, priests, and townspeople were gathered about him; but the sermon and the examination were so prolonged, that it was soon past midday and this multitude was oppressed by the sweltering heat. Then the heretic cried out so that all could hear: 'O Peter, if thou be as holy as this mob of fools proclaims, why dost thou allow them to smother with the heat? Why dost thou not ask thy God to send a cloud to cool the air?' And Peter answered: 'If thou wilt promise to renounce thy heresy and to be converted to the Catholic faith, I shall pray to God, and He will do as thou askest!' Then all the heretics who stood with their bishop exclaimed: 'Promise, promise!' For they thought that the miracle which Peter foretold was impossible, since not a handful of cloud could be seen in the sky. On the other hand, the Catholics were dismayed at Peter's proposal, fearing that his failure might discredit the faith. And even when the heretic refused to pledge himself, Peter said to him in a voice full of confidence: 'No matter! In order that the true God, Creator of all things seen and unseen, may manifest Himself to the comfort of the faithful and the confusion of the heretics, I pray Him to place a cloud between the sun and this crowd!' He then made the sign of the cross, and at once a cloud spread over the sky: and like a canopy this cloud screened the multitude from the heat of the sun for more than an hour.

One day a man named Asserbus was brought to Saint Peter in Milan. For five years this man had been paralysed, and had to be drawn about in a little wagon. Saint Peter made the sign of the cross over him, and at once he was cured, and stood up.

In his lifetime the saint performed many another miracle, and some of them are reported to us by Pope Innocent in the epistle already mentioned. There, for instance, we find the story of a young nobleman who had a dreadful tumour in the throat, which hindered both his speech and his breathing: the saint made the sign of the cross over him and covered him with his own mantle, and instantly he was cured. Later, the same nobleman was afflicted with pains of the stomach, and seemed at the point of death; and he called for the mantle, which he had reverently saved. Scarce had he been covered therewith, when he vomited up a worm which had two heads

and was black and hairy; and he felt himself made well forthwith.

Another time Saint Peter made to speak a young man who was dumb, by putting his finger into the young man's mouth, and breaking the cord which bound his tongue.

The plague of heresy was raging in Lombardy, and already several cities were infected with it. In this circumstance the sovereign pontiff despatched to the divers parts of the province a number of inquisitors, all of the Order of Friars Preachers, and charged them to wipe out this pestilence of the Devil. In Milan the heretics were especially numerous, and among them were men who occupied places of power, and who were endowed with an evil craftiness of mind and words. Therefore the pope, knowing Peter's intrepid courage, firmness, and eloquence, chose him to lead the fight in Milan and throughout the surrounding region, granting him full authority for this work. Taking his mission to heart, the saint harassed the heretics without giving them respite. He turned back their arguments, refuted them, and confounded them with the truth of God, so that none could withstand his wisdom, and the Spirit who spoke through him. Seeing this the heretics were thrown into consternation, and began to plot his death, thinking that they might have peace if only they could be quit of so stalwart an adversary.

One day, as he was returning from Como to Milan, Peter won the palm of martyrdom.

Pope Innocent relates this as follows: From the city of Como, where he was the prior of the brethren of his Order, Peter was on his way to Milan to carry out the office of judge which had been bestowed upon him by the apostolic see. One of the heretics, egged on by pleas and gifts from his fellow believers, set upon the saint, as Peter himself had foretold in one of his sermons. He fell upon him like the wolf upon the lamb, like the savage upon the meek, like the godless upon the pious, like the enraged upon the gentle, like the furious upon the humble, like a pagan upon a saint. He dares the heinous assault, commits the murder, and strikes the sacred head with fearsome blows of his sword. But the saint does not flee from his assassin, but offers himself a willing victim, patiently sustaining the cruel attack, albeit his soul was already mounting towards Heaven; and the murderer, his sword sated with the blood of the just, leaves him for dead upon the spot. Even when the impious assail-

ant redoubled his blows, the saint uttered neither plaint nor protest, but suffered patiently, saying only: 'Lord, into Thy hands I commend my spirit!' And then he recited once more the symbol of faith, as was related by the assassin himself, who fell into the hands of the faithful a short time later, and also by a Dominican friar who accompanied Peter, was waylaid with him, and died of his wounds a few days later. Then seeing that the martyr was slow in dying, the assassin drew his knife and drove it into Peter's side.

Thus Peter, by a singular blessing, was confessor, martyr, and prophet, all in one day. For as he was setting out that morning, his brethren had said to him that, worn and feverous as he was, he would with difficulty reach Milan in a single stage; and he had answered: 'If I do not come to the convent of my brethren, Saint Simplicianus shall give me lodgement for the night.' But when his sacred body was brought back to Milan in the evening, the brothers were unable to bear it to their convent, due to the pressure of the crowds; and they set it down in the church of Saint Simplicianus, and there it lay throughout the night. But the assassin and his confederates were balked of their purpose; for by his martyrdom Peter did more for the conversion of the heretics than by the works of his life. So much wrought he thereto by the memory of his merits and his miracles, that the greater number of the heretics renounced their errors, and returned to the bosom of the Roman Church. The city and county of Milan were purged of heresy in a few days. And many of the most persuasive and renowned of the preachers of heresy entered the Order of Preachers, which Order still continues to combat these errors with vigour. Thus our Samson, by his dying, killed more Philistines than he could have slain by living. He was like a grain of wheat that falls to the ground and is picked up by the hands of the unbelievers, and dying rises again in a fertile stalk. He was the grape which in the press gives forth much juice. He was the spice that, ground in the mortar by the pestle, gives forth a wondrous odour. He was the mustard seed that increases in strength when it is ground.

After Peter's death, God honoured his triumph with numerous miracles, some of which are related by Pope Innocent. Several times, for example, the lamps which hung above his tomb were lighted of themselves.

A certain man, while he was at table, was belittling Peter's holiness and his miracles, when of a sudden the morsel which he was eating stuck fast in his throat, so that he could neither swallow nor reject it. Already his face was changing colour, and he felt the approach of death, when, repenting of his words, he made a vow never again to speak ill of the saint: and at once he threw up the mouthful which was choking him; he could speak again and was saved.

A woman, afflicted with dropsy, caused her husband to lead her to the place where Saint Peter had suffered, and soon in answer to her prayers she was made whole.

Women, long possessed by demons, were cured by Saint Peter and he caused them to vomit up the evil spirits with much blood. He also drove out fevers and cured many other afflictions.

A youth, due to a fall, lay motionless and senseless and was thought to be dead. Thereupon, earth mixed with the sacred blood of the martyr was placed upon his breast, and on the instant he was cured.

A woman, suffering of a grievous cancer, was also cured by means of this same earth when it was applied to her wound. Many others were seen to come to the saint's grave, some on crutches and some in carts, but they were able to return, healed, without assistance.

When Pope Innocent IV raised Peter to the honours of sainthood, the Friars Preachers, gathered in chapter at Milan, decided to unearth the saint's body and to bury it beneath an altar. And although more than a year had passed since his martyrdom, the body was found incorrupt, as if it had been interred the day before. The brothers laid it out upon a platform, and the populace were brought thither to see and venerate it.

In addition to the miracles already recounted, and which were contained in the pope's letter, there were many more. So, for example, many religious and others as well, saw lights descending from Heaven upon the place where the saint suffered martyrdom; they bore witness that they had seen two brothers, wearing the Dominican habit, amid the lights.

A certain young man named Geoffrey, of the city of Como, preserved a piece of Saint Peter's tunic. In order to make sport of him, a heretic told him to throw this bit of cloth into the fire, saying that if the flames did not consume it, Peter's holiness would thereby be



proven, and he himself would be converted. Geoffrey therefore cast the piece of Saint Peter's mantle upon some burning coals. At first it hung over the fire, and then, falling into it, put it out in a twinkling. Then the unbeliever said: 'A piece of my own cloak would do as much!' Other coals were therefore lighted, and the two snippings were placed before them side by side. And the heretic's mantle was burnt up at once, while Saint Peter's tunic extinguished the fire and remained unscathed. At this the heretic returned to the true faith, and made known to all the miracle which he had witnessed.

In Florence a youth who was a heretic and a profligate stood with his companions in a church which had a painting which depicted the martyrdom of Saint Peter; and seeing in the picture an assassin attacking Peter with his naked sword, he cried out: 'Had I been present, I would have struck even mightier blows.' No sooner had he said this than he was struck dumb. His companions asked him what was the matter, but he could not answer them; so they led him to his home. On their way, as they passed the church of Saint Michael, he tore himself from their grasp, fled into the church, and prayed to Saint Peter in his heart for mercy, vowing that if he were cured he would renounce his heresy and confess his sin. Suddenly, his speech was restored to him and he hurried to the convent of the Order. There he confessed his sins and gave his confessor permission to preach openly of the occurrence. And he himself, while the brothers were conducting the services, arose and related what had happened to him.

It happened that a ship was in distress on the high seas, in the blackness of the night, and the waves washed over its decks. The crew called upon all the saints but no succour appeared, and it seemed as if all were doomed. Then one, who hailed from Genoa, asked permission to speak, and when the rest were silent, he said: 'Men, dear brothers, have you not heard that recently Brother Peter, of the Order of Friars Preachers, was massacred by the heretics, because of the Catholic faith, and that the Lord has worked many miracles through him? Let us call upon his protection in all humility, and pray that we may not be deceived.' They agreed with him and called upon Saint Peter's help. And as they were still praying, lights suddenly appeared upon the yardarm to which the sail was

fastened, and the blackness gave way to light, and the night seemed to turn into day. As they looked up, a man in a Dominican habit stood over the sail, and they saw that it was Saint Peter. The waves became quiet, and a great calm ensued; and soon after, they reached the harbour of Genoa unharmed. They hurried to the convent of the Friars Preachers and thanked God and His saint; and they recounted to the monks the miracle that had occurred.

There was a woman of Flanders who suffered three stillbirths in succession, and her husband was much wroth thereat. She prayed to Saint Peter for aid; but when she bore a fourth time, again the child was dead. Then, taking up the child, she prayed to Saint Peter that he might restore it to life, and no sooner was her prayer finished than the dead child came alive. When the child was carried to the church to be baptized, it was decided to call him John; but when the time came for the priest to speak the name, he unwittingly said 'Peter,' and the child retained the name ever after.

It happened in Utrecht, in the German land, that a number of women were sitting in the market place spinning; and they saw a multitude in front of the Dominican church celebrating Saint Peter the Martyr. And they said to those around them: 'See how these Dominicans are at all times seeking new ways of gain; now they have invented a new martyr that they may gain great riches with which to build huge palaces.' As they spoke these things and more besides, the thread which they were spinning was suddenly covered with blood, and their hands likewise. They were greatly astonished at this and examined their fingers carefully to see if they had been cut, but their hands were whole and the thread alone was covered with blood. And trembling and repentant, they said: 'Truly, because we have slandered the precious blood of the martyr, this miracle of blood happened to us.' And they arose, hurried to the Dominican convent, and told the prior what had occurred and showed him the bloody thread. Thereupon the prior called all together, recounted to them what had happened to the women, and showed them the thread. Assisting at the sermon was a master grammarian who began to laugh at the procedure and said: 'See how these brothers seek to deceive the hearts of the simple-minded; these women have caused their friends to dip their thread in blood, and now they proclaim it a miracle.' No sooner had he finished, than God's wrath fell upon him, and, in the presence of all, he was seized with

a fever, so that his friends had to carry him home. But the fever grew apace and the man, fearing that he was about to die, caused the prior to be summoned, confessed his misdeed, and in his presence vowed that if Saint Peter would cure him, he would never do the like again, and henceforth would venerate the saint in all honour. Hardly had he spoken when by a miracle he was whole and sound again.

It happened that the sub-prior of this same convent was carrying many large and costly stones in a ship for the building of a church; but the ship ran on a sand bank and could not be moved. The sailors climbed out of the ship, but try as they might, they could not move the vessel, and they were about to give it up as lost. Then the sub-prior bade them all desist from their labours; he placed his hand upon the ship and, giving it a gentle push, he said: 'Go, in the name of Saint Peter the Martyr, in whose honour we are carrying these stones!' Immediately the ship began to move, and the sailors went aboard and returned home joyously.

At Sens, in France, a maid fell into a raging torrent and remained therein for a long time. When they drew her out, she was dead, and this was proven by four things: she had lain in the water a long time, her body was stiff, cold, and black. They carried her to the church of the Friars Preachers and prayed to Saint Peter for her; and soon life was restored to her and she arose.

Brother John of Poland was suffering in Bologna from the four-days' fever; however, on the feast of Saint Peter, he was to preach to the other monks. But, since in the course of nature, he expected another attack on that night, he feared that he could not preach as he had been ordered to do. He turned to Saint Peter for aid, knelt before his altar, and prayed for assistance from him in whose honour he wished to preach. In the same night, the fever disappeared and troubled him no more.

A woman, Girola by name, and the wife of Jacob of Vallesana, was possessed of unclean spirits for a period of fourteen years. She came to a priest and said: 'I am possessed and the evil one tortures me.' The priest, filled with fear, ran into the sacristy and secretly placed a stole under his cape, together with the book which contained the ritual of exorcism. Then he returned, with a goodly crowd, to the woman. When she saw him coming, she cried out aloud: 'Where hast thou been, thou thief? What dost thou carry hidden

under thy cape?' Then he began to read the prayers of exorcism, but he could accomplish nothing. Then the woman went to Saint Peter, who was still alive at that time, asking him for aid. He, in the spirit of prophecy, replied: 'Daughter, as yet I cannot grant thee what thou askest; but fear not, the time will come when I can help thee.' And so it happened. For when the saint had suffered martyrdom, the woman came to his grave and was completely cured.

A woman by the name of Euphemia who lived in Corriongo in the diocese of Milan, had been plagued by the Devil for seven years. They led her to the grave of Saint Peter, whereupon the demons within her began to rave and to cry out through her mouth so that all could hear: 'Mary, Mary, Peter, Peter!' And the demons fled from out of her and left her lying as dead; but not long after, she arose and was cured. She told that the demons tormented her particularly on Sundays and feast days, but most of all, when Mass was being read.

A woman, Verbona by name, of Beregno, was tortured for six years by devils. As they led her to the grave of Saint Peter, the men who were leading her could scarce hold her. Among them was a heretic called Conrad of Ladriano, who had come so that he could ridicule the saint. As he was holding the woman with the rest, the devils spoke out of her mouth: 'Why dost thou hold us? Art thou not one of us? Did we not lead thee to such and such a place, that thou couldst commit a murder? Did we not accompany thee when thou didst commit that deed?' The man was astounded beyond measure. But the demons tore the woman's breasts and throat asunder and departed from her, leaving her as dead. Shortly thereafter, she arose and was restored to health. When Conrad the heretic saw this he was even more surprised, and was converted to the true faith.

A heretic named Opiso came one day into the Friars' chapel in Milan, and seeing two pence on Saint Peter's tomb, made off with them, saying: 'How good of him to offer me to drink!' But at once he fell into an ague, and was powerless to move a step. Terrified, he returned the money and was converted.

There was a religious of the Order of Saint Sixtus in the convent of Ottenbach, in the diocese of Constance, who had suffered for more than a year with a grievous gout in her knee, and no remedy could avail her. Since she could not visit Saint Peter's tomb in person,

bound as she was by her vows and her suffering, she thought to go there in spirit, in all humility. She had been told that one could reach Milan after a fourteen days' journey, and so she began to recite a hundred Our Fathers for every day of the journey in honour of the saint. And lo and behold, from day to day she grew better and, having completed the last day's journey in spirit, she went to the saint's grave as if she were actually there in the flesh, and recited the entire Psalter. Having done this, she felt almost entirely cured and returned home, as she had travelled thither, and was completely cured before her spiritual pilgrimage was ended.

A man of Canapicio, Rufinus by name, who resided in Mazzati, suffered severely, for one of his veins had burst and blood poured forth without ceasing, and no physician could help him. When the blood had flowed for six days and six nights without interruption, he prayed to Saint Peter for assistance with all earnestness. He was so quickly cured that no time seemed to elapse between the prayer and the cure. Thereupon he fell asleep and saw, in his dream, a monk in the Dominican habit, strong and brown of countenance, and he took him to be a companion of Saint Peter, and in truth he was. The monk spread out his hands towards the man; they were full of blood and an aromatic ointment; and he said; 'The blood is still fresh; come to the fresh blood of Saint Peter.' And when the man awakened, he determined to make a pilgrimage to the saint's tomb.

Several noblewomen of the castle Massino, in the diocese of Ivrea, were especially devoted to Saint Peter; they fasted on his vigils, went to his church to hear Vespers, and one of them placed a candle on the altar in honour of Saint Peter the Martyr. When they had gone home, an avaricious priest, led by greed, blew out the candle; but the light reappeared and the candle burned anew. He blew it out a second and a third time, but each time the candle was again lighted. Displeased, the priest went into the choir, where he found a candle on the main altar which had been donated in honour of the saint by a clerk, who was keeping his vigil. The priest wished to blow out this candle as well, and tried to do so twice. Seeing this, the clerk called out: 'Wicked devil, is this not a manifest miracle, and seest thou not that Saint Peter does not wish thee to put out his candles?' Thereupon, the clerk and the priest went up to the castle, and related with much astonishment what they had seen.

A man, Roba de Meda by name, had lost everything but his

clothing while gambling. Late that night he returned to his house; but when he had lit the light and approached his bed, he saw that the sheets were much worn, and he thought of how he had lost all his possessions. In his need, he called upon the Devil and entrusted himself to him. No sooner had he done this, than three demons appeared, threw the light to the ground, and taking hold of the man, threw him back and forth, and strangled him so that he could not speak. As they were thus raging about, the people who lived below him came up and said: 'Roba, what is this?' The demons replied: 'Go in peace and retire to your beds.' But the people thought it was the voice of Roba and departed. When they had gone, the demons again began to torture the man more violently. Then the people became aware of this, and they called the priest, who commanded the demons to depart in the name of Saint Peter, and two of the demons did so. The next day, they led Roba to the tomb of Saint Peter, and Brother William of Vercelli rebuked the Devil. Then the demon, who had never seen him before, cried out: 'Brother William, thou canst not drive me out of him, for he is ours and has done our work.' And William asked him his name. The demon answered: 'I am called Balcephas.' However, being called upon in the name of Saint Peter, the demon threw the possessed man to the ground and departed from him. With this Roba was saved and did penance.

It is told that one time a certain heretic, an eloquent and tireless disputant, engaged Saint Peter in debate, and pressed him with such subtle arguments that the saint, sore distraught, retired to a nearby church, and begged God with tears to defend the faith for him. Then, returning to the heretic, he told him to rehearse his arguments anew. But the heretic had been stricken dumb, and could not utter a single word. And this befell to the great confusion of his sect, while the faithful thanked God mightily therefor.

It happened, while Saint Peter was still alive, that he was preaching on Palm Sunday in Milan. And since there were many of both sexes present, he cried out in a loud voice: 'I know for truth that the heretics seek my death, and have already set aside the money for my murder; but let them do what they will, for as soon as I am dead, I will persecute them more zealously than I did in my lifetime.' And all came to pass as he had said.

On the day of the saint's martyrdom, a religious was at prayer in

the convent de Ripulis, in Florence, when she had a vision of the Virgin Mary seated upon her throne of glory, and welcoming to her side two brothers of the Order of Preachers. She asked who these brothers might be, and a voice made answer: 'They are Brother Peter and his comrade, who have just now ascended to Heaven like the smoke of incense.' And later this religious, afflicted with a dire sickness, prayed to Saint Peter and was cured at once.

A clerk who was on his way back from Magalona to Montpellier, ruptured himself in jumping; and his pain was so intense that he could not walk. He heard tell that a woman who was afflicted with a cancer had spread on the wound a handful of earth soaked with the blood of Saint Peter, and had been cured thereby. Then he said: 'O God, I have none of that earth; but since by the merits of the saint Thou gavest it such power, Thou canst give a like power to this earth beneath my feet!' And gathering a handful of earth, and calling upon the saint, he rubbed his hurt and was healed forthwith.

In the year of the Lord 1259, an inhabitant of Compostella named Benedict had his legs swollen like wine skins, his belly blown up like a woman with child, and his face eaten away by a huge tumour; and all were in terror of him as of a monster. And when one day he sought alms of an old woman, she said to him: 'More need hast thou of a grave than of anything else; but follow my counsel! Go to the house of the Friars Preachers, confess thy sins, and invoke the aid of Saint Peter the Martyr!' The man went to the Friars' convent, but found the doors still closed. He lay down before the door and fell asleep. And there appeared to him a friar, who wrapped him in his mantle and took him into the church; and when he awoke, Benedict found himself in the church, and entirely whole. And all who on the day before had seen this man near to death, and now found him in sound health, were filled with wonderment and admiration.

## SAINT PHILIP THE APOSTLE

MAY I

Philip means a mouth of light or a mouth of hands. Or, it comes from *philos*, love, and *yper*, above; and means a lover of higher things. He is called a mouth of light because of his illuminating preaching, a mouth of hands because of his diligent labours, a lover of higher things because of his divine contemplation.

The apostle Philip had been preaching in Scythia for twenty years when the pagans seized him, and tried to compel him to offer sacrifice to a statue of the god Mars. But suddenly a huge dragon emerged from the foot of the statue, and slew the son of the priest who was preparing the fire for the sacrifice, together with the two tribunes who had arrested Philip; and at the same time he exhaled a breath so noxious that all who stood near were stifled by it. And Philip said: 'Believe me! Break this statue, and adore the Lord's Cross in its stead, so that those of you who are sickened may be well, and that these dead may return to life!' But the pagans, becoming ever more ill, cried out: 'Let us but be cured, and we promise thee that we shall destroy the statue at once!' Then Philip spoke to the dragon, and commanded him to betake himself to a desert place where he could do no harm to anyone. The dragon obediently went away, and was never seen again. Thereupon Philip cured all those whom the dragon's breath had sickened, and restored the three dead men to life. Thus he converted the whole city, and spent another year preaching within its walls. Then, having ordained priests and deacons, he went to a city of Asia called Hierapolis, where he put down the heresy of the Ebionites, who held that Christ had taken a body different from our human body.

He had with him his two daughters, who were persons of great holiness, and by whose agency God brought many souls to the true faith. And a week before his death, Philip called together the bishops and the priests, and said to them: 'The Lord grants me seven days more to carry on your instruction.' And one week thereafter he was taken by the infidels, and fastened to a cross, in like manner as the divine Master whose doctrine he preached. Thus his soul took flight to the throne of the Lord. And beside him were buried his two virgin daughters, one to the right, the other to the left.



Isidore tells us, in his book, *Life and Death of the Saints*: 'Philip the Galilean preached Christ, brought the faith to the barbarian peoples who sat in darkness on the coasts of the ocean, and brought them light and led them into the harbour of faith, and in the end was crucified, stoned, and put to death, at Hierapolis, in the province of Phrygia, where he is buried between his two daughters.' Thus says Isidore.

Of another Philip, who was one of the first seven deacons, Saint Jerome tells us that he died at Cæsarea on the eighth day of the month of July, after performing many miracles, and that he was buried with three of his daughters, while a fourth reposes at Ephesus. But he is not the same as the first Philip, who was an apostle and not a deacon, who was buried at Hierapolis and not at Cæsarea, and who had two daughters and not four. The *Ecclesiastical History* indeed seems to indicate that the apostle Philip had four daughters, who were endowed with the gift of prophecy; but on this point Saint Jerome's opinion deserves more credence.

## SAINT JAMES THE LESS

### MAY I

James, which is Jacobus in Latin, means one who entraps; or, one who causes others to trip; or, one who prepares. Or, it comes from *Ja*, God, and *cobar*, burden, weight. Or Jacobus may be the same as Jacopus and comes from *jaculum*, javelin, and *cope*, stroke: one who is struck down with javelins. He is called one who entraps, for he trapped the world with his disdain; one who trips, because he tripped the Devil; one who prepares, for he prepared his body for all that which was good. Evil desires, however, come to us from three sides, as Gregory of Nyssa writes: from careless bringing up or evil companionship, from evil bodily practices, and from ignorance. They are driven out, says the same writer, through good usage, good practice, and zealous learning. And thus James drove them out and prepared his body for the good. He is called divine weight for the gravity of his morals. He is called struck with javelins because of his martyrdom.

The Saint James of whom we are to speak is designated by several

names. He is usually called James the son of Alpheus, or James the Brother of the Lord, or James the Less, or James the Just. He is James the son of Alpheus not only because of his father's name, but also because of the meaning of Alpheus, which signifies wise, or lesson, or thousandth. For James was wise in the divine wisdom, he was a lesson for others, and he fled the world which he despised, and wished, through humility, to be the thousandth.

His name of Brother of the Lord is thought to come from the fact that he was so like our Lord in his features that more than once he was mistaken for Jesus. Thus it was that when the Jews came to seize Christ, they feared to take James in His stead; and therefore they ordered Judas to point out Our Lord to them by giving Him a kiss. This explanation of the name of Saint James is confirmed by Saint Ignatius in his letter to John the Evangelist, wherein we read: 'With thy leave, I wish to go to Jerusalem and to visit the venerable James, surnamed the Just, of whom it is said that he resembles Jesus Christ so strongly in face, manners, and speech, that he might have been taken for His twin.'

This surname may also come from the fact that Jesus and James were the children of two sisters, and that Cleophas, the father of James, was the brother of Joseph. However this may be, the surname Brother of the Lord cannot mean, as some have proposed, that James was the son of Joseph, the spouse of the Blessed Virgin: for he was the son of Mary the daughter of Cleophas, who himself was the brother of Joseph the spouse of the Virgin Mary.

As for the name of James the Less, it distinguishes him from James the Greater, the son of Zebedee, who, although he was called later than the other James, was older in years.

Finally, the surname the Just recalls the preëminent holiness of James, who, according to Saint Jerome, was so deeply venerated by the people that they contended for the honour of touching the hem of his garment. And Hegesippus, who had occasion to know the apostles, writes concerning his sanctity, as we read in the *Ecclesiastical History*: 'The governance of the Church was entrusted to James the Brother of the Lord, who by common agreement has always been called the Just. So great was his holiness, from the very womb of his mother, that he never drank wine nor strong drink, nor ate meat; no scissors touched his head, nor did he anoint himself with oil, nor thought it needful to bathe. All his life he wore only a simple

hempen garment. And he knelt so much in prayer that his knees had calluses such as are formed on the soles of the feet. Thus he alone, of all the apostles, was allowed, on account of his sanctity, to enter into the Holy of Holies.' It is also said that he was the first of the apostles to offer the Mass, the disciples having bestowed upon him the honour of celebrating the first Mass at Jerusalem, after the Ascension of Our Lord, and before he was yet consecrated bishop. Saint Jerome, in his book against Jovinian, adds that James the Less never knew the pleasures of the flesh. When Jesus died on the cross, James made a vow to eat nothing until his Master had risen from the dead. On the very day of His Resurrection, Jesus appeared to him, and said to those who were with him: 'Make ready the table and the bread!' Then, taking the bread, He blessed it and gave it to James, saying: 'Arise and eat, My brother, for the Son of Man has risen from the dead!'

In the seventh year of his episcopate, on Easter day, the apostles came together in Jerusalem, and related to James all that the Lord had accomplished through them since they had separated. Thereafter James and the other apostles preached for seven days in the Temple, in the presence of Caiphas and a large number of the Jews. And these were about to ask for baptism when on a sudden another Jew burst into the Temple and cried: 'O men of Israel, what are ye about? Will ye still be deluded by these magicians?' And this man stirred up the people to such a point that the apostles barely escaped being stoned. He himself leapt upon the platform from which James was preaching, and hurled him down from his height, so that he was lamed for the rest of his days. Thus, seven years after the Ascension of the Lord, James suffered the first time for his Master.

In the thirtieth year of his episcopate, the Jews, angry because they had failed to kill Saint Paul, who had appealed to Cæsar and had been sent to Rome, turned their wrath upon Saint James, and sought an occasion to do him to death. Hegesippus, the contemporary of the apostles, tells us that the Jews came to James and said to him: 'We demand that thou bring back to the truth these poor folk, who, in their blindness, believe that Jesus was the Messiah. If thou turnest away from Jesus the multitude that is about to gather for the feast of the Pasch, we shall all give thee our obedience, and shall pay thee honour as to the most righteous among us.' Then

they led him to the pinnacle of the temple, and began to cry out to him: 'Oh just man, whom we are all to follow, speak thy mind concerning the error of those who believe in Jesus Who was crucified!' But James foiled their expectations, and exclaimed in a thunderous voice: 'Why do ye question me about the Son of Man? Behold Him seated at the right hand of the Father in Heaven, from whence He shall come to judge the living and the dead!' Hearing this, the Christians were overjoyed, but the Scribes and the Pharisees said to each other: 'Fools were we to call him to witness! Let us go up to him and cast him to the earth, lest the crowd be frightened into believing him!' Then they cried out: 'Behold! The just man himself is fallen into error!' Then they mounted to the pinnacle of the Temple and hurled him to the ground, and began to stone him. But he raised himself to his knees and said: 'I pray Thee, Master, forgive them, for they know not what they do!' Then one of the priests, the son of Rahab, cried out: 'O senseless men, what are ye doing? Behold, this just man whom ye stone yet prays for you!' Then one of the Jews, laying hold of a fulling stock, dealt Saint James a blow on the head which spilt his brains upon the pavement. And so did the martyr yield up his spirit to God, in the reign of Nero, which began in the year 57. He was buried hard by the Temple. The multitude was minded to avenge his death and to apprehend his murderers, but these had already made good their escape.

Josephus states that it was in punishment of the murder of Saint James that the destruction of Jerusalem was permitted, as also the dispersion of the Jews. But more than the death of Saint James, it was the death of Our Lord Himself which brought this terrible fate upon Jerusalem, as Jesus said: 'They shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone, because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation.' But as God desires not the death of the sinner, forty years of grace were left to the Jews in which to do penance, while at the same time the preaching of the apostles, and especially that of Saint James the Less, pressed them unceasingly to repent. But, being unable to convert the Jews by the preaching of the apostles, Our Lord sought at least to move them by wonders: and Josephus reports a long series of marvels which befell during these forty years. For a whole year a star which had the shape of a sword hung over the city. Once, in the days of the unleavened bread, in the ninth

hour of the night, a light as bright as the noontide sun shone about the Temple. At the same feast a heifer which was to be sacrificed, and which was already in the hands of the priests, calved a lamb. Some days later, at the setting of the sun, chariots filled with armed men were seen racing over the clouds from every direction. The night of Pentecost, the priests who entered the Temple to prepare the sacrifices heard strange sounds, as if the building were collapsing, and unseen voices which said: 'Let us away from this place!' Lastly, four years before the war, on the day of the feast of Tabernacles, a certain Jesus, the son of Ananias, began to shout: 'Voices from the East, voices from the West, voices from the four quarters of the earth, voices over Jerusalem and over the Temple, voices over husbands and wives, voices over the whole people!' The man was seized and beaten with rods, but always he repeated the same words, crying more loudly as each blow fell. He was brought before the judge, and tortured until the bones of his members were bare. But he, not weeping, not suing for mercy, shouted the same words over and over, and further cried: 'Woe to thee, woe to thee, Jerusalem!'

Then, since the Jews would not be touched by warnings nor moved by wonders, the Lord sent Vespasian and Titus to Jerusalem, and they razed the city to the ground. The circumstances of their coming were as follows, according to a certain history which is in truth apocryphal.

Pilate, aware that he had condemned an innocent man, and fearing the wrath of the Emperor Tiberius, sent a messenger named Albanus to the emperor, to justify the death of Jesus. But at that time Vespasian, with Tiberius' commission, was governor of Galatia; and Albanus was driven by a tempest upon the Galatian coast, and was brought to Vespasian. And the custom of that country was that anyone who was shipwrecked upon its shores became the slave of the prince. Vespasian asked Albanus who he was, whence he came, and whither he was going. Albanus replied: 'I live in Jerusalem, I come from that city, and I am on the way to Rome.' 'Thou art from the land of the sorcerers,' said Vespasian, 'and therefore thou must possess the secret of healing. Be quick to heal me, then!' For since childhood Vespasian had had some sort of vermin in his nose, whence came his surname of Vespasian. Albanus answered: 'Sire, I know no medicine, and I cannot heal thee.' But Vespasian retorted: 'Unless thou cure me, thou shalt die!' Then Albanus

said to him: 'He Who was able to give sight to the blind, to drive out devils, and to raise the dead to life, He alone, and not I, can cure thee!' 'And who is he?' asked Vespasian. 'Jesus of Nazareth,' said Albanus, 'whom the Jews put to death for envy. Believe in Him, and thou shalt straightway regain thy health!' 'I believe,' replied Vespasian, 'that if He could raise the dead, He can likewise deliver me of my infirmity.' And instantly the worms came out of his nose, and he was made well. Overcome with joy, he cried: 'Indeed this man was the Son of God, since He was able to cure me! And I shall demand of Cæsar permission to go to Jerusalem, and to punish those who betrayed this man and brought him to his death. And thou, Albanus, return to thy master, for I set thee free!' Vespasian then set out to Rome, in order to obtain from Tiberius license to destroy Jerusalem and the whole land of Judea. For several years during the reign of Nero, he gathered troops, while the Jews, on their side, were in revolt against the empire. But other chronicles affirm that it was not zeal for Christ, but the desire to suppress the rebellion of the Jews, which led him to act. Finally, at the head of a large army, he marched upon Jerusalem, and on the day of the Pasch laid siege to the city, wherein were thus trapped a great multitude of Jews who had come in from the country for the feast days. On the road he stormed a town of Judea called Jonapata, of which Josephus was the chieftain; and this latter, seeing that the destruction of the town was a matter of hours, took refuge with eleven Jews in an underground vault, and there he and his companions suffered from hunger for four days. Despite the counsel of Josephus, these unhappy men preferred death to submission to Vespasian's yoke. They therefore determined to kill each other, offering their blood to God as a sacrifice: and since Josephus was chief among them, they thought that he should be the first to die. But Josephus being a prudential man, and not in haste to die, appointed himself the judge of the sacrifice, and decreed that they should draw lots, two by two, to decide the order in which they should be put to death. Thereafter he consigned his companions to death one after the other, until only he remained with the man who was to draw lots with him. Then Josephus being strong and agile, deftly took this man's sword from him, and asked whether he wished to live or to die. The man was seized with fear, and entreated him to spare his life. Josephus then secretly sought out one of Vespasian's retinue, and begged him

to ask his master to be merciful to him. He was led to Vespasian, and said to him: 'Prince, I make known to thee that the emperor of Rome has just now died, and that the Senate has elected thee to his place!' 'If thou art a prophet,' said Vespasian, 'why didst thou not foretell to this town that it would be forced to yield to me?' And Josephus replied: 'I foretold it to them forty days ago.' However, some days later legates arrived from Rome to announce to Vespasian that he had been made emperor. The new emperor set out for Rome, leaving his son Titus to carry on the siege of Jerusalem.

The same apocryphal history goes on to relate that Titus, at the news of his father's honour, was so overjoyed that his nerves were contracted and one of his limbs was paralysed. Learning of this, Josephus divined the real cause of the malady, and taxed his wits to find a remedy, deeming that contrary should cure contrary. Now Titus had a slave whom he so hated that he could not bear the sight of him, nor even hear his name uttered, without suffering. Therefore Josephus said to Titus: 'If thou wilt be cured, give courteous greeting to all whom thou seest in my company!' Titus promised to do so. And immediately Josephus prepared a banquet, at which he seated the hated slave opposite Titus, and at his own right side. And as soon as Titus saw him, he felt a surge of revulsion which heated his sinews, that were chilled with the excess of his joy, and cured his paralysis. Thenceforth he treated this slave with favour, and admitted Josephus to his friendship. — So runs the story: be it for the reader to decide whether such a story was even worth setting down.

The fact is that Jerusalem was besieged by Titus for two years. And among other ills, the city had to suffer famine so stringent that parents snatched the food not only from the hands but from the mouths of their children, and children from their parents. The most stalwart of the young men wandered about the streets like ghosts, and fell dead of hunger. Often those who were burying the dead expired upon the corpses, so that in the end the dead were no longer interred, but thrown in heaps from the walls. Seeing the moats filled with bodies, Titus wept and said: 'O Lord, Thou seest that 'tis not I who have done them to death!' And such was the famine that the besieged people gnawed at their shoon.

A rich and noble lady, seeing pillagers invade and rifle her home,

held her new-born child high in the air, and cried: 'Unhappy son of an unhappy mother, for what good end would I preserve thee in the midst of so many miseries? Come, my child, be food to thy mother, to the robbers a scandal, to the ages a warning!' Whereupon she strangled her son, had him cooked, ate the half of his body, and hid the other half. But when the robbers smelled the odour of cooked meat, they burst in and threatened the woman with death if she did not give up her store of meat. Then the woman showed them the members of her child, and said: 'Take it, for I have saved you the better part!' They were so horrified that they knew not what to answer. But she went on: 'It is my son. The sin is mine. Eat without fear, since I, who bore him, have eaten first. Would you be more pious than a mother, and softer than a woman? And if horror stays you, alone I shall finish what I have already half eaten!' But the robbers ran away in fear and trembling.

Finally, in the second year of the reign of Vespasian, Titus took Jerusalem, and levelled the Temple to the ground. And as the Jews had bought Christ for thirty pieces of silver, so Titus decreed that thirty Jews should be sold for one piece of silver. So, as Josephus writes, ninety-seven thousand Jews were sold, but eleven hundred thousand perished by the sword, or died of hunger. It is also said that Titus, going through Jerusalem, saw a wall which was thicker than the others. He had an opening broken through it, and an old man of venerable aspect was found behind the wall. Upon being questioned, the old man said that he was called Joseph of Arimathea, and that Jews had immured him because he had buried the body of Christ. He added that thereafter he had been fed and cared for by angels who came down from Heaven. But on the other hand, the gospel of Nicodemus tells us that Joseph of Arimathea, after being immured by the Jews, was freed by Christ and brought back to his native city. Yet nothing forbids us to suppose that when he returned to Arimathea, Joseph continued to preach Christ, and was immured a second time by the Jews.

At Vespasian's death, Titus succeeded his father on the throne. He was a man of clemency and liberality. Eusebius of Cæsarea and Saint Jerome tell us that one day, remembering that he had that day done no good deed, he exclaimed: 'O my friends, I count this day lost!'

Long after this, certain Jews set about the rebuilding of Jerusalem.



But one morning when they came out of their houses to go to their work, they perceived everywhere crosses marked in dew upon the earth, and fled in terror. The next morning, when they set to work again, each of them saw a cross of blood traced upon his garment, and again they fled. Finally, on the third day, a burning vapour issued from the ground, and consumed them. At least so we are told by Miletus in his chronicle.

## THE INVENTION OF THE HOLY CROSS

MAY 3

Under the name of the Invention of the Holy Cross, the Church celebrates the anniversary of the day on which the Cross of Our Lord was rediscovered. Before this time, it had been found by Seth, the son of Adam, in the earthly paradise, as we shall learn below; after that, it was found by Solomon on Lebanon, and again by the queen of Saba in the Temple of Solomon; thereafter it was found by the Jews in a fish pond, and today by Saint Helena on the Mount of Calvary. This event took place more than two hundred years after the Resurrection of Christ.

We read in the gospel of Nicodemus that one day when the aged Adam was ailing, his son Seth went to the gate of the Garden of Paradise and asked for a few drops of the oil from the tree of mercy, that he might anoint his father's body and thus repair his health. But the Archangel Michael appeared to him and said: 'Nor by thy tears nor by thy prayers mayest thou obtain the oil of the tree of mercy, for men cannot obtain this oil until five thousand five hundred years have passed,' which is to say, after the Passion of Christ. However, it is believed that only five thousand one hundred and ninety years had passed from the time of Adam to the Passion of Christ. Another chronicle relates that nevertheless the Archangel Michael gave to Seth a branch of the miraculous tree, ordering him to plant it on Mount Libanus. Still another history, from the Greek, which is admittedly apocryphal, adds that this tree was the same that had caused Adam to sin; and that when he gave the branch to Seth, the angel told him that on the day when this tree should bear fruit, his father would be made whole. And when Seth came

back to his house, he found his father already dead. He planted the branch over Adam's grave, and the branch became a mighty tree, which still flourished in Solomon's time.

Solomon, struck by the beauty of the tree, cut it down in order to use it in the erection of the Temple. But no place could be found wherein it could be used: for sometimes it appeared to be too long, and at other times too short, and when the builders tried to cut it to the length desired, they discovered that they had cut off too much. Thereupon they became impatient with the tree, and threw it across a pond, to serve as a bridge. But when the queen of Saba came to Jerusalem to try the wisdom of Solomon with hard questions, she had occasion to cross this pond; and she saw in spirit that the Saviour of the world would one day hang upon this tree. She therefore refused to put her foot upon it, but knelt instead to adore it. The *Scholastic History* says that the queen of Saba saw the miraculous tree in the Temple, and that upon her return to her own country she wrote to Solomon that upon this tree would one day be hanged the man whose death would put an end to the kingdom of the Jews; whereupon Solomon had the tree taken away, and ordered it to be buried deep in the earth. And at the spot where the tree was buried, the pond called Probatika later welled up; so that it was not only the descent of the angel, but also the power of the tree buried in the earth, which caused the motion of the water and the healing of the sick.

And lastly it is told that when the Passion of Christ drew nigh, the wood of the tree floated to the surface of the water, and that the Jews, seeing it, fashioned Our Lord's Cross from it. But on the other hand, tradition holds that the Cross of Christ was fashioned of four different woods, namely the wood of the palm-tree, of the cypress, of the olive, and of the cedar, which accounts for the verse: *Ligna crucis palma, cedrus, cypressus, oliva*, each of these forming one of the four parts of the cross, namely the upright beam, the cross-beam, the tablet placed at the top, and the shaft which supported the base, or else, according to Gregory of Tours, the stand on which Christ's feet rested. It would appear that Saint Paul referred to the four different kinds of wood when he said: 'You may be able to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth.' Augustine, the great teacher, interprets these words in this fashion: 'The Cross of Christ: the breadth is the cross-

beam upon which His arms were outstretched; the length reaches from the earth to the crossbeam on which His body hung; the height is above the crossbeam, where His head rested; but the depth is under the earth in which the Cross was buried.' But the reader must judge of the truth of the divers legends which we have here set down; for sooth to say, none of them is mentioned in any authentic chronicle or history.

After the Passion of Christ, the precious wood of the Cross remained hidden in the earth for more than two hundred years, and was at last found by Helena, the mother of the Emperor Constantine, in the following circumstances.

At that time an innumerable horde of barbarians was massing on the bank of the Danube, making ready to cross the river, in order to subjugate the entire West. At these tidings, the Emperor Constantine marched forth with his army, and camped on the other bank of the Danube. But when the number of the barbarians continued to increase, and they began to make their way across the river, Constantine was filled with fear at the thought of the battle which he had to undertake. But in the night an angel awoke him, and told him to lift up his head. And Constantine saw in the heavens the image of a cross described in shining light; and above the image was written in letters of gold the legend: 'In this sign shalt thou conquer!' Taking heart at the heavenly vision, he had a wooden cross made, and commanded that it be carried in the van of his army; and then, falling upon the enemy, he cut them to pieces or put them to flight. After this he called together the priests of the various temples, and asked them what god it might be whose sign was a cross. The priests knew not what to respond, until several Christians came, and unfolded to the emperor the mystery of the holy Cross, and the dogma of the Blessed Trinity. And when Constantine heard them, he believed in Christ; and he received baptism at the hands of Pope Eusebius, or, in the opinion of others, from Eusebius the bishop of Cæsarea.

But here again we are dealing with a legend which is contradicted by the *Tripartite History*, the *Ecclesiastical History*, the life of Saint Sylvester, and the chronicle of the popes. Another tradition indeed declares that the Constantine of this story is not the great emperor who was converted by Pope Saint Sylvester, but another Constantine, his father. And this tradition adds that at his father's

death, Constantine recalled the victory which the deceased ruler had owed to the power of the holy Cross, and sent his mother Helena to Jerusalem to search for this miraculous Cross.

The *Ecclesiastical History* gives a different account of the victory of Constantine. It tells us that the battle took place near the Pontus Albinus, where Constantine encountered Maxentius, who was attempting to invade the Roman Empire. And when the care-laden emperor raised his eyes to Heaven to plead for succour, he saw in the eastern sky the gleaming sign of the cross, surrounded by angels who said to him: 'Constantine, in this sign shalt thou conquer!' And as Constantine was wondering what this meant, Christ appeared to him during the night, with the same sign, and ordered him to have an image made of it, which would aid him in the battle. The emperor, now assured of victory, made the sign of the cross upon his forehead, and took a gold cross in his hand. Then he prayed to God that the hand that had held the sign of the cross might never be stained with Roman blood. And Maxentius, when he was about to cross the river, forgot that he had caused the bridges to be undermined in order to draw Constantine to destruction; and he started to pass over a bridge which had been sapped, and was drowned in the river. Then Constantine was acclaimed emperor without opposition. And another chronicle, which is of sufficient authority, adds that even then he delayed his conversion until the day when, after Saint Peter and Saint Paul appeared to him in a vision, he was healed of his leprosy, and was baptized by Pope Sylvester. Furthermore Saint Ambrose, in his letter on Theodosius, and the *Tripartite History* affirm that even then he put off his baptism, in order that he might be baptized in the waters of the Jordan. And this the chronicle of Saint Jerome likewise tells us.

However all this may be, it was Helena, the mother of Constantine, who led the search which ended in the Invention of the Holy Cross. Some say that this Helena was an inn-servant whom Constantine's father married for her beauty. Others declare that she was the only daughter of Coel, the king of the Britons, and that Constantine's father took her to wife when he went to Britain, and thus became master of the island at the death of Coel. This is also maintained by the Britons, albeit another account states that Helena came from Trier. When she came to Jerusalem, Helena summoned

before her all the learned Jews of the land. And these were alarmed, and said to one another: 'For what cause does the queen summon us?' Then one of their number, named Judas, said: 'I know that she wishes to learn from us where the wood of the Cross upon which Jesus was crucified is to be found. Now here is what my grandsire Zacheus told to my father Simon, who repeated it to me when he lay dying: "My son, whensoever thou shalt be questioned about the cross of Jesus, do not fail to make known where it is, else thou shalt endure torments without number. And yet that day shall be the end of the kingdom of the Jews, and thenceforth they shall reign who adore the Cross, for verily the man who was crucified was the Son of God!" And I said to my father: "Father, if our forefathers knew that Jesus was the Son of God, wherefore did they crucify Him?" And my father replied: "God knows that my father Zacheus never lent his approval to what they did. It was the Pharisees who crucified Jesus, because He denounced their vices. And Jesus rose from the dead on the third day, and ascended to Heaven in the sight of His disciples. And my uncle Stephen believed in Him, wherefore the Jews, in their rage, stoned him. Beware then, my son, never to blaspheme against Jesus or His disciples!"' However, it does not seem credible to us that the father of this Judas could have been alive at the time of the Passion of Christ, for from his day to the time of Helena two hundred and seventy years had passed, unless, on the other hand, men lived longer in those days than in our time. Thus spake Judas, and the Jews said to him: 'Never have we heard the like of this!' But when they came before the queen, and she asked them in what place Jesus had been crucified, all refused to make it known to her; and she therefore ordered them all to be cast into the fire. Then the Jews, affrighted, pointed out Judas to her, saying: 'Princess, this man is the son of a prophet, and knows all things better than we; he will reveal to thee all that thou desirest to know.' Then the queen dismissed all save Judas, to whom she said: 'Choose between life and death! If thou wilt live, show me the place which is called Golgotha, and tell me where I shall discover the Cross of Christ!' Judas made answer: 'How should I know this, since two hundred years have passed since then, and I was not even born?' But the queen retorted: 'I swear to thee by the Crucified that I shall let thee die of hunger, if thou

refusest to tell me the truth!' And thereupon she had Judas thrown into a dry well, and ordered that no food was to be given to him.

On the seventh day, Judas, weak from hunger, asked to be drawn from the well, and promised to reveal the whereabouts of the Cross. And when he came to the place where it lay hidden, he smelled in the air a delightful aroma of spices; and overcome with astonishment, he exclaimed: 'In truth, O Lord, Thou art the Saviour of the world!'

Now at that place there stood a temple of Venus, which had been raised by the Emperor Hadrian, so that whoever should come to adore Christ would appear to adore Venus at the same time. And for this reason the Christians had ceased to visit the place. But Helena had the temple torn down; whereupon Judas himself started to dig into the earth, and twenty feet beneath the surface he found three crosses, which he at once caused to be carried to the queen.

It remained only to distinguish the one to which Christ had been nailed from those of the thieves. All three were set up in an open space; and Judas, seeing the corpse of a young man being borne to the tomb, halted the cortege, and laid first one, then another of the crosses upon the body. But the corpse did not move. Then Judas laid the third cross upon it; and instantly the dead man came to life.

But the *Ecclesiastical History* relates that it was Macarius, the bishop of Jerusalem, who determined which was the true cross, by using it to revive a noble lady who was near to death.

Saint Ambrose declares that Macarius recognized the Cross by the inscription which Pilate had long ago affixed to it.

When this had occurred, the Devil cried out aloud: 'O Judas, what hast thou done? Thou hast acted quite differently from my Judas. At my behest he betrayed Christ, and thou, against my wishes, hast revealed His Cross. He won over many souls to me, and through thee I shall once more lose them. Through him I was given power over many, and thou wouldst drive me from my kingdom. But I say unto thee: I shall revenge myself, and will raise up a prince against thee who has fallen from his belief in the Crucified, and he will force thee to deny Christ amidst much suffering.' Thereby he meant Julian the Apostate who, after Judas had been made bishop of Jerusalem, tortured him and brought him to martyrdom. But when Judas heard the crying and shouting of the Devil,

he was not afraid, but cursed him without fear, saying: 'May Christ damn thee to the depths of everlasting fire!'

Judas was then baptized, took the name of Cyriacus, and was made bishop of Jerusalem at the death of Macarius. And Saint Helena, wishing to have the nails which had pierced Jesus, prayed the bishop to seek them. Cyriacus again betook himself to Golgotha, and began to pray; and at once the nails came into view, shining like gold out of the earth, and he made haste to carry them to the queen. And she, falling to her knees and bowing her head, adored them piously.

She brought back to her son Constantine a part of the Cross, leaving the other part in the place where she had found it. She also gave her son the nails, which, according to Gregory of Tours, were four in number. Two of the nails were placed in the bridle which Constantine used in war; a third was set in the statue of Constantine which overlooked the city of Rome. The fourth Helena herself threw into the Adriatic Sea, which until that time had been a perilous whirlpool for mariners. And she it was who ordained that every year the anniversary of the Invention of the Holy Cross should be celebrated with all solemnity.

The holy bishop Cyriacus was later put to death by Julian the Apostate, who sought to destroy the sign of the cross wherever it was found. Before Julian set out to the war against the Persians, he demanded that Cyriacus offer sacrifice to the idols; and when the bishop refused, he ordered his right hand to be cut off, saying: 'That hand has written much that has led the people away from the worship of the gods!' But Cyriacus answered: 'Mad dog, thou dost me a great service; for this hand has been a scandal to me, since in the past it wrote many letters to the synagogues to turn the Jews away from the worship of Christ!' Then Julian had molten lead poured into the bishop's mouth, and caused him to be laid upon an iron bed, and burning coals to be thrown upon him, together with salt and fat. But through all this Cyriacus remained unmoved. Then Julian said to him: 'If thou wilt not sacrifice to the gods, at least declare that thou art not a Christian!' At the saint's refusal, he was thrown into a pit of venomous reptiles; but the serpents perished at once, and the bishop was unscathed. Then he was thrown into a cauldron of boiling oil; and at the moment when he

entered it, he entreated God to grant him the second baptism of martyrdom. At this Julian, carried away with anger, ordered the executioners to run him through the breast with swords. And in this manner the holy bishop breathed forth his soul to God.

The sovereign power of the holy Cross is proven by the story of a pious scribe, whom a certain sorcerer led by deceit to a place where he had summoned the demons. In this place the scribe saw a huge Ethiopian seated upon a high throne, and surrounded by other blackamoors who carried lances and rods. The Ethiopian, who was Satan himself, said to the scribe: 'If thou wilt deny Christ, and adore and serve me, I shall seat thee at my right hand!' But the scribe proclaimed that he would ever remain the servant of Christ; and the moment he made the sign of the cross, the whole horde of demons vanished. Some time later, the scribe went into the church of Saint Sophia with his master, and while the two stood before the image of Christ, the master noticed that the eyes of the image were fixed upon the scribe. Then he placed him first at his right, then at his left, but the eyes of the image followed him wherever he went. Filled with wonderment, the master asked his scribe how he had come to merit so signal an honour. And the steward replied that he knew of no act of his that might have brought this honour upon him, save that one day, in the presence of the Devil, he had refused to deny Christ.

## SAINT JOHN BEFORE THE LATIN GATE

MAY 6

John the Apostle and Evangelist was preaching at Ephesus, when the proconsul arrested him and commanded him to offer sacrifice to the gods. Upon his refusal, he was thrown into prison, and the proconsul wrote a letter to the Emperor Domitian, in which he accused the apostle of sacrilege, of contemning the gods, and of adoring the Cross. When he received this letter, Domitian caused John to be brought to Rome. There, after his head was shaved in token of his infamy, he was condemned to be plunged into a cauldron of boiling oil, in the sight of all the populace, before one of the gates of the city, which was called the *Porta Latina*. But the saint felt





**O** The name of that  
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he shold not see ony wycked spyrte  
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of my sayntes / Be not thou wrothe to  
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not the slightest pain, and emerged unscathed. In memory of this miracle the Christians built a church on this site, and the anniversary of his torture was celebrated as the feast of his martyrdom.

Meanwhile the saint continued to preach Christ, until by the order of Domitian he was exiled to the island of Patmos. And we may recall, in this regard, that the Roman emperors persecuted the apostles not because they preached Christ, but because they proclaimed the divinity of Christ when this divinity had not been recognized by the Roman senate, as the law required. And the *Ecclesiastical History* narrates that when Pilate wrote to Tiberius and made known to him the death of the Lord, Tiberius declared that he was ready to permit the Christian faith to all the Romans; but the senate rejected his proposal, because Christ had been named a god without its permission. According to another chronicle, the senate's refusal was due to the fact that Christ had not first revealed Himself at Rome. Another states that the senate refused to sanction the worship of Christ because He condemned the gods whom the Romans worshipped, and had preached contempt of the world, whereas the Romans were by nature greedy and ambitious. Then again, Christ did not wish to be approved by the Romans, lest He appear to be subject to human power. Master John Belet states another reason why the emperor and the senate persecuted Christ and the apostles: it seemed to them that a god who suffered no other gods beside him, was too proud and jealous. Finally, Orosius maintains that the senate was incensed because Pilate had announced Christ's miracles to Tiberius, and not to the senate itself; and that Tiberius, angered in turn at the refusal of the senate, put a number of senators to death, and exiled several others.

It is also said that the mother of Saint John, learning that her son was in prison in Rome, set out to come to him; but when she arrived in Rome, she found that Saint John had already been exiled to the island of Patmos. Again therefore she took the road to Palestine, but died on the way, in a town of Campania called Vetulana. For a long time her body lay hidden in a cavern, until Saint John revealed its whereabouts to Saint James. The body was then transferred amid great honours to a church of Vetulana, where it wrought many miracles.

## THE ROGATIONS

The Rogations, or Litanies, are celebrated twice each year, the first time on the feast of Saint Mark, and the second time during the three days preceding the Ascension. The first of these two Litanies is called *Letania Major*, or the Greater, and the second *Letania Minor*, or the Lesser.

The first Litany has three names: it is called the Greater Litany, the Septiform Procession, and the Black-Crosses. It is called the Greater Litany because it was instituted by Gregory the Great, because it was instituted in Rome, the mistress and head of the world, and in the see of the apostles, and because its institution was marked by grave and memorable circumstances. For the Romans, after living continently all during Lent, were wont to throw themselves into such an orgy of games and pleasures that God, in His anger, sent upon them a dreadful plague, which is called '*inguinaria*' because it produced a swelling in the groin. And so cruelly did this pestilence rage that men died in the street, at table, at play, or while they were talking to each other. Ofttimes a man sneezed, and expired at the moment of sneezing. Thus when anyone was heard to sneeze, those who heard him made haste to say 'God bless you!' This is said to be the origin of this custom. In like manner it often befell that a man yawned, and fell dead. Hence when one felt the approach of a yawn, he quickly made the sign of the cross, a custom which still prevails. As for the spread of this plague and its miraculous ending, we have already told the story in the life of Saint Gregory.

This Litany is called the Septiform Procession, because Saint Gregory arranged the procession of that day in seven ranks. First came the clergy, then the monks and religious, then the nuns, then the children, then the laymen, then the widows and virgins, and lastly the married women. And since in our day we can scarce assemble all these groups in our procession, we supply for the seven ranks by seven recitations of the Litany.

Thirdly this Litany is called the Black-Crosses, because not only was the entire procession robed in black, as a sign of grief and penance, but the crosses and the altars were veiled in haircloth.

The Lesser Litany, which is celebrated in the three days before the feast of the Ascension, was instituted earlier than the Greater,

about the year 458, by Saint Mamertus, the bishop of Vienne, in the reign of the Emperor Leo. It is also called the Rogations and the Procession.

It is called the Lesser Litany to distinguish it from the Greater, and also because it was instituted by a lesser dignitary of the Church, in a less important place, and in less significant circumstances. At that time there were frequent earthquakes in Vienne, which overthrew the houses and not a few churches. Fearful rumblings were heard at night. And on Easter day a fire fell from Heaven, and destroyed the king's palace. And just as in olden times God had given leave to the demons to enter into the bodies of a herd of swine, so now the wolves and other savage beasts roamed freely through the houses, devouring old and young, men and women. Confronted with such a tale of calamities, Bishop Mamertus ordered a three-day fast, and instituted this Litany, and in this wise obtained the cessation of the ills which beset the city. Later the Church decreed that this Litany should be observed by all the faithful.

The Lesser Litany is also called Rogations, because in these three days we implore the help of the saints, asking them, by our prayers and fasts, to obtain four favours for us: first, that God put an end to the wars, which are especially frequent in the springtime; second, that He preserve and multiply the fruits of the earth, which are beginning to bud; third, that He still the commotions of our flesh, which are more violent at that season; and fourth, that by these prayers and fast we may the better prepare to receive the Holy Ghost, and may merit His coming. Master William of Auxerre gives two other reasons. First, when Christ ascended into Heaven, He said: 'Ask and you shall receive,' wherefore the Church asks with all confidence. Secondly, the Church prays and mortifies the flesh in order that she may have but little of the flesh, and may gain to herself wings. For prayer is the wing of the soul by which it flies to Heaven, so that it may freely follow Christ in His Ascension, He having ascended to prepare the way for us and having flown upon the wings of the wind. For a bird heavy of flesh and thin of wing can fly but poorly, as we see in the ostrich.

Finally this feast is also called the Procession, because in these days the Church holds a great procession in which the cross is carried, the bells are rung, a banner is borne, and the patronage of all the saints is especially invoked. We carry the cross and ring the bells

that the demons may flee in terror; for as the king in the midst of his army has the royal ensigns, namely the trumpets and banners, so Christ the eternal King in the midst of His Church militant has the bells for trumpets, and the cross for a banner. And as a tyrant is much affrighted at hearing in his land the trumpets of a powerful enemy king and seeing his banners, so also the demons who dwell in the dark are stricken with fear when they hear the trumpets of Christ, namely the bells, and see His banner, the cross.

The banner is carried to signify the victory of the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ, Who mounted to Heaven with a great prey. Whence the banner riding through the air is Christ ascending into Heaven; and as a multitude of the faithful follows the banner in procession, so a great gathering of saints accompanies Christ ascending.

In certain churches, and especially in the churches of Gaul, there is the custom of carrying a dragon with a long tail stuffed with straw; the first two days it is so borne before the cross, but on the third day, it is carried behind the cross with the straw removed from the tail. By this is signified that in the first day, before the Law, and in the second day, under the Law, the Devil ruled in this world, but in the third day, namely the day of grace, he was driven from his kingdom by the Passion of Christ.

In this procession it is also customary to sing the canticle of the angels, *Sancte Deus, sancte, fortis, sancte et immortalis, miserere nobis*. John of Damascus relates that one day when the Litanies were being celebrated in Constantinople, a child was snatched from the crowd and taken up to Heaven, and there the angels taught him this canticle. Then he was returned to his place in the crowd, and he sang the canticle which he had learned: and instantly the calamity came to an end. Therefore the Council of Chalcedon approved the use of this canticle everywhere, since it had the power of inspiring a special fear in the demons.

## SAINTS GORDIAN AND EPIMACHUS

MAY 10

Gordian comes from *geos*, dogma or house, and *dyan*, bright, and so means a bright house in which God abode; as Augustine says in the *City of God*, 'A good house is balanced in its parts, spacious and bright.' So this saint was balanced in his parts because he lived in harmony with his brethren, spacious by his charity, bright by his sincerity. Epimachus comes from *epi*, above, and *machin*, king, that is, a supernal king, or from *epi*, above, and *machos*, a fight, which means one who fights for the things above.

Gordian was an officer of the Emperor Julian. The emperor charged him to compel a Christian called Januarius to sacrifice to the idols; but he was converted by this Christian's preaching, and was baptized with his wife, whose name was Marina, and fifty-three other persons. Learning of this, Julian sent Januarius into exile, and ordered that Gordian should be beheaded if he refused to offer sacrifice to the gods. Saint Gordian therefore had his head cut off, and his body lay exposed to the dogs for eight days. But as it remained untouched, the martyr's kinsmen finally bore it away and buried it a mile outside the city, with the remains of Saint Epimachus, whom Julian had previously put to death. This occurred about the year of Our Lord 360.

## SAINTS NEREUS AND ACHILLEUS

MAY 12

Nereus is translated a counsel of light. Or, it comes from *nereth*, lamp, and *us*, hastening. Or, it comes from *ne*, not, and *reus*, guilty. Thus he was a counsel of light in his preaching of virginity; a lamp in his upright conduct; hastening in his fervour for Heaven; not guilty in the purity of his conscience. Achilles comes from *achi*, my brother, and *lesa*, salvation, and means the salvation of his brethren. The martyrdom of these saints was written by Euthices, Victorinus and Macro, servants of Christ.

Nereus and Achilleus, who were baptized by the apostle Saint Peter, were eunuchs in the service of Domitilla, the niece of the Emperor Domitian. When this princess was espoused to Aurelian, a consul's son, and was decked in purple garments and precious gems, Nereus and Achilleus preached the faith to her. They exhorted her to virginity, recommending it as a virtue dear to God, sister to the angels, and innate in man. They told her that the wife was subject to her husband, that often she was exposed to blows and kicks, and often brought forth misshapen offspring; and that if it was hard for her now to bow to the kindly admonitions of her mother, still less could she bear humiliations from her husband. Domitilla answered: 'I know that my father was a jealous man and that my mother suffered much from him: but why should I believe that my husband will be like to him?' And they replied: 'Because while men are betrothed they seem filled with gentleness, whereas after marriage they rule as cruel masters; and moreover, they often prefer the serving maid to the mistress. And all the other virtues, once lost, may be recovered by penance. Virginity alone can never be regained.' Then Flavia Domitilla believed in Jesus, made a vow of virginity, and took the veil from the hands of Saint Clement.

At this her betrothed, with Domitian's permission, sent her into exile together with Nereus and Achilleus, in the island of Pontus, thinking that by this means he would bend the maiden to his will. Some time later, he himself went to the island, and plied the two eunuchs with gifts, entreating them to intervene on his behalf with their mistress. But they rejected his offers, and worked the more zealously to strengthen her in her faith. Being called upon to offer sacrifice to the idols, they answered that they could not do so, because they had received holy baptism from Saint Peter the apostle. In consequence they were both beheaded in the year of the Lord 80. Their bodies were interred close by the remains of Saint Petronilla.

Then Aurelian condemned three others, named Victorinus, Euthices, and Macro to labour as slaves in his vineyards all the day long, and at night gave them the food of dogs to eat. And in the end he ordered Euthices to be beaten to death, Victorinus to be suffocated in a dung-pit, and Macro to be crushed beneath a huge stone. But when this stone, which seventy men could scarce budge, was thrown upon Macro, he caught it lightly upon his shoulders, and carried



it as light straw for two miles. At the sight of this many were converted; and the consul had Macro put to death.

Then the consul recalled Domitilla from exile, and sent her two milk-sisters, Euphrosina and Theodora, to reason with her; but she converted them to the Christian faith. Then Aurelian went to Domitilla's abode with the plighted spouses of the two maidens, and with three minstrels, in order to celebrate his nuptials, and to take her by force; but Domitilla had already converted the two betrothed youths. Nevertheless the consul put her by force into his bed, and ordered the minstrels to sing, and the two young men to dance with him, intending afterwards to ravish the virgin. But soon the minstrels wearied of singing, and the two dancers of dancing: and the consul, overcome with dizziness, continued to dance for two days, until he fell dead from fatigue.

His brother Luxurius then obtained leave of the emperor to put all the Christians in the city to death. During the night he set fire to the bed wherein the three virgins were sleeping; and joining in prayer, they breathed forth their souls to God. On the morrow, Saint Cæsarius found the three bodies unscathed, and buried them in the earth.

## SAINT PANCRACTIUS

MAY 12

Pancratius comes from *pan*, whole, and *gratus*, pleasing, and *citius*, quickly, and means one who pleases quickly, namely in his youth. Or, as the *Gloss* says, *pancras* means booty, or *pancranarius*, which is beaten with scourges; or *pancras* means a varicoloured stone. For he carried off the booty of the captives; he received the blows of martyrdom; he was coloured with the variety of his virtues.

Pancratius, who came of a noble family, was bereaved of his father and mother during a stay in Phrygia, and was entrusted to the care of his uncle Dionysius. With his uncle he returned to Rome, where his family possessed great properties; and thus they came to know Pope Cornelius, who was in hiding with the faithful hard by their estates. Won by the preaching of Cornelius, Dionysius and Pan-

cratius accepted the Christian faith; whereupon Dionysius expired in peace, and Pancratius was captured and brought before the emperor. At this time he was barely fourteen years of age. The Emperor Diocletian said to him: 'Dear child, heed my counsel, and save thyself from a dreadful death! For I know that a child of thy years is easily misled; and what is more, thou art of noble lineage, and the son of a man whom I much loved. Heed me then, and put away the folly of thy Christianity; and I shall deal with thee as with my own son!' But Pancratius replied: 'In body I am a child, but I bear a man's heart: and by the grace of my Master Jesus Christ, thy threats seem as vain to me as this idol which stands before me. And as for the gods whom thou desirest me to adore, they are naught but impostors, who sully the women of their own household, and spare not their own kin. If thine own slaves today behaved as these gods, thou wouldst be in haste to put them to death. And it wonders me much that thou dost not blush to adore such gods!' Then the emperor, shamed at being bested by a child, had him beheaded, on the Via Aureliana, in the year of the Lord 287. The martyr's body was piously interred by Cocavilla, the wife of a senator.

Gregory of Tours relates that whenever a perjurer nears the tomb of Saint Pancratius, either he falls dead on the flagstones, or else a demon seizes him and sets him writhing in a fit. Two men were on trial, and the judge knew which of them was the culprit; but in his zeal for justice, he led the two men to the altar of Saint Peter, and made the guilty one swear that he was innocent as he pretended, beseeching the apostle to make the truth known by some miraculous sign. And when he swore and remained unharmed, the judge was angry, and exclaimed: 'Old Saint Peter is too merciful! Let us consult young Saint Pancratius instead!' And when the real culprit stood ready to repeat his perjury at the saint's tomb, he was unable to raise his arm, and fell dead a moment later. Hence it is that even today, in difficult cases of justice, the custom is to make the accused swear upon the relics of Saint Pancratius.

## SAINT BONIFACE

MAY 14

The passion of Saint Boniface, who suffered martyrdom in the city of Tarsus in the reign of Diocletian and Maximian, and was buried at Rome, on the Via Latina.

Boniface was the steward of a noble lady named Aglaë, and at the same time was her illicit lover. Finally one day, as though warned by a sign from God, he and his mistress decided that Boniface should go in search of the bodies of the martyrs, in the hope that his pious acts would merit salvation for both of them. Boniface therefore set out upon his journey. And when he arrived in the city of Tarsus he said to his companions: 'Good friends, do you now seek lodgings for all of us! As for me, I am in haste to go and see those in search of whom I have come.' Then he ran into the public square, and there saw the blessed martyrs, one of whom was hanging with a fire beneath his feet, another stretched upon a rack, another being torn with iron hooks, another with his hands cut off. And while he who himself was afire with the love of Christ, looked upon these divers tortures, he began to call upon the God of the martyrs. Then, drawing nearer to them, he sat down at their feet, kissed their chains, and said: 'Martyrs of Christ, spurn the Devil, and have patience! Your pains are nothing in comparison with the peace and joy which await you!' Hearing these words, the judge Simplicius summoned him before his tribunal and said to him: 'Who art thou?' The saint responded: 'I am called Boniface, and I am a Christian.' At this the judge was angered, had him seized, and ordered him to be slashed with points of iron until all his bones were bared. Then splinters were driven under his finger nails. And when the martyr, his eyes turned to Heaven, rejoiced in the midst of these torments, the wicked judge commanded that his mouth be opened and boiling lead poured in. But the martyr repeated again and again: 'I thank Thee, Lord Jesus, Son of the living God!' Then he was plunged head downward into a tub of boiling pitch. And when even this did him no harm, the judge ordered him to be beheaded. And at the instant when his head fell, a great earthquake occurred, which showed forth the power of Christ, and converted a large number of infidels.

In the meantime the other servants of Aglaë, who had accompanied Boniface, went about the city in search of him, saying to each other: 'Surely he is wallowing in adultery, or else besotting himself in some tavern!' And as they spoke, they met an imperial officer in the street. 'Hast thou perchance come upon a stranger, a Roman, hereabouts?' they asked him. He made answer: 'Yesterday a stranger was beheaded in the square.' 'What appearance had he?' they asked. 'The man whom we seek is stocky and strong, with shaggy hair, and is clothed in a red mantle.' And the officer replied: 'That is the man whom we have tortured and put to death!' But they protested: 'Surely thou art in error, for the man we seek is a drunkard and a libertine!' 'Come and see for yourselves!' said the officer. And when he showed them the venerable head and body of the martyr, they said: 'Yea verily, this is he whom we sought! Give us his remains!' The officer refused to give them up without payment. But in return for five hundred sols they were allowed to bear away the martyr's body, which they hastened to anoint with spices and to wrap in precious linens; and then they carried it back to Rome, rejoicing and glorifying God.

An angel of Heaven appeared to the saint's mistress, and made known his blessed death to her. At once Aglaë set out to meet the body, and raised a church worthy of it at the very place where she met it, about five stadia from the city. The martyrdom of Saint Boniface took place on the fourteenth day of May, and his burial on ninth day of July.

Thereafter Aglaë renounced the world, distributed all her goods to the poor, freed her slaves, and, by her fasting and prayers, merited so well of the Lord Jesus that she was enabled to perform miracles in His name. She survived the martyr by twelve years, and was buried at his side.

## THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD

Our Lord's Ascension took place on the fortieth day after His Resurrection. With regard to His Ascension, seven things are to be considered: namely, whence He ascended, why He did not ascend immediately after His Resurrection, but waited so many days, the manner of His Ascension, with whom He ascended, by what merit

He ascended, whither He ascended, and for what reasons He ascended.

As to the first question, let us note that Our Lord ascended from Mount Olivet, on the side toward Bethany. The name of this mountain is otherwise translated the *mountain of the three lights*: for at night it was lighted from the West by the fire of the Temple, since a fire burned continually upon the altar; in the morning it received the first rays of the sun from the East, before the city was lighted by them; and moreover, the mountain bore a great quantity of oil, which is the source of light. Christ therefore commanded the disciples to go upon this mountain: for He appeared to them twice on the day of His Ascension. The first time He appeared to the eleven apostles while they sat at table in the cenacle. For at this time the apostles and the other disciples and the holy women abode in the quarter of Jerusalem which was called Mello, on Mount Sion, where David had built a palace. And in this place there was a large cenacle, or dining room, furnished, in which Our Lord had commanded that the paschal lamb be prepared for Him. And in the cenacle the eleven apostles dwelt, while the disciples and the women abode here and there in the various inns. And while they were at table in the cenacle, Our Lord appeared to them, and upbraided them with their incredulity and hardness of heart, and ate with them, and ordered them to go upon Mount Olivet on the side toward Bethany. And there He appeared to them a second time, and answered those who questioned Him imprudently, and lifting up His hands, blessed them, and thence ascended into Heaven in the sight of all. Concerning the place of the Ascension, Sulpicius, the bishop of Jerusalem, says, and the *Gloss* likewise reports, that when at a later time a church was built there, the spot whereon the feet of Christ had rested could not be covered with paving-stones. The marble slabs which were laid there broke in pieces, and burst in the faces of those who were setting them. And he says that in the dust where Christ trod the marks of His step can still be seen, and the earth still bears the print of His feet.

As to the second question, namely why Christ did not ascend at once, but waited for forty days after His Resurrection, we may say that He did this for three reasons. The first was in order to give a sure proof of the Resurrection. It was more difficult to prove the Resurrection than to prove His Passion and death: for His death

could be proven by the lapse between the first and the third days, but more days were required to prove the Resurrection, and therefore a greater time was needed between the Resurrection and the Ascension than between the Passion and the Resurrection. Of this Pope Leo says in his sermon on the Ascension: 'Today is fulfilled the span of forty days ordained by the sacred will of God and measured to our need of instruction, so that while Our Lord so prolonged His corporeal presence in this time, our faith in the Resurrection might be propped with the necessary proofs. We therefore give thanks for the divine dispensation, and for the needful hesitancy of the holy fathers: for they doubted in order that we might be freed from doubt.' The second reason was that He might console the apostles, for God's consolations are more abundant than our trials, and as the time of the Passion was a time of trial for the apostles, so the days of consolation were properly more numerous than the days of the Passion. The third reason has to do with the mystical meaning, that we might understand that God's consolations are compared to earthly trials as a year to a day, a day to an hour, an hour to a moment. That they are compared as a year to a day appears from *Isaias*: 'He hath sent me to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God.' Thus for a day of tribulation God gives a year of consolation. That they are compared as a day to an hour is manifest from this, that Our Lord lay in the grave for forty hours, which was a time of tribulation, and appeared to His disciples for forty days after His Resurrection, which was a time of consolation. And that they are compared as an hour to a moment is suggested by *Isaias*: 'In a moment of indignation have I hid my face a little while from thee, but with everlasting kindness have I had mercy on thee, said the Lord thy Redeemer.'

As to the third question, namely in what manner He ascended. First, with power, because He ascended by His own power. Thus *Isaias*: 'Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bosra, this beautiful one in his robe, walking in the greatness of his strength.' So also *John*: 'No man hath ascended into Heaven (that is, by his own power), but he that descended from Heaven, the Son of man who is in Heaven.' And although He was lifted up in a globe of clouds, this was not done because He had need of the help of a cloud, but that it might thereby be made manifest that every creature is ready to serve its Creator. For He ascended by the

power of His godhead, and in this is seen His power and lordship. For Henoch was taken by God, and Elias went up into Heaven by a whirlwind, but Jesus ascended by His own power: and the first of these, according to Saint Gregory, was engendered and did himself engender, the second was engendered but himself engendered not, and the third neither engendered nor was engendered. Secondly, He ascended visibly, in the sight of His disciples, whence it is said: 'While they looked on, He was raised up.' And in John: 'I go to him that sent Me, and none of you asketh Me, whither goest Thou?' to which the *Gloss* adds: 'Openly therefore, that no one might need to question what was seen with the eyes of the flesh.' He willed to ascend in the sight of His disciples, in order that they might be witnesses to His Ascension, and might rejoice that a human being was carried up into Heaven, and might yearn to follow Him thither. Thirdly, He ascended joyously, because the angels rejoiced, whence the Psalm says: 'God is ascended with jubilee, and the Lord with the sound of trumpet.' And Augustine says: 'Christ ascends: and the whole heaven trembles, the stars stand in awe, the heavenly hosts applaud, the trumpets resound and mingle their dulcet harmonies with the joyful choirs.' Fourthly, He ascended swiftly, as the Psalm says: 'He hath rejoiced as a giant to run the way'; and He traversed this great distance as in a moment. For Rabbi Moses, the great philosopher, declares that each circle, or the heaven of each planet, is a journey of five hundred years in width, that is, it is as great a space as a man could travel on a plane road in five hundred years; and the distance between heaven and heaven is likewise five hundred years' journey. Thus since there are seven heavens, from the center of the earth to the vault of the heaven of Saturn, which is the seventh heaven, there is a distance of seven thousand years' journey, and to the vault of Heaven a distance of seven thousand and seven hundred years' journey, that is, as far as a man could travel on a plane road in seven thousand and seven hundred years, if only he lived so long; each year being composed of 365 days, a day's journey being forty miles, each mile containing two thousand paces or cubits. Thus says Rabbi Moses, and if it be true only God knows, since He made all things in their number and mass and dimension. This was therefore a great leap, which Christ made from the earth to Heaven; and of this and certain other leaps of Christ, Ambrose says: 'By one leap Christ came into the world; He was

with the Father and came into the Virgin, and from the Virgin leapt into the crib, went down into the Jordan, mounted the Cross, descended into the grave, came forth from the sepulchre, and took His seat at the right hand of the Father.'

As to the fourth question, namely with whom Christ ascended, let us note that He ascended with a great prey of men and a great multitude of angels. That He ascended with a great prey of men is clear from the words of the Psalm: 'Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive; Thou hast received gifts in men.' And that He ascended with a great multitude of angels appears from the queries which the lesser angels made to the greater when Christ ascended, as we find in Isaiah: 'Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bosra,' whereof the *Gloss* says that certain angels did not have full knowledge of the mystery of the Incarnation, Passion and Resurrection; and seeing the Lord ascending into Heaven by His own power, with a multitude of angels and of holy men, they wondered at the mystery of the Incarnation and the Passion, and said to the angels who accompanied the Lord: 'Who is this that cometh'; and in the Psalm: 'Who is this King of glory?'

As to the fifth question, namely by what merit Christ ascended, we may say that it was by a threefold merit, whereof Saint Jerome writes: 'Because of truth, since Thou hast accomplished those things which through the prophets Thou hadst promised; and because of meekness, since as a lamb Thou art immolated for the life of the people; and because of justice, since not by might but by justice hast Thou redeemed man, and "Thy right hand shall conduct Thee wonderfully," that is, Thy power and Thy virtue shall lead thee to Heaven.'

As to the sixth question, namely whither He ascended, let us note that He ascended above all the heavens, as it is written in the epistle to the Ephesians: 'He that descended is the same also that ascended above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.' For in sooth there are several heavens above which He ascended, namely the material, the rational, the intellectual, and the supersubstantial. The material heaven is manifold, since there are the ærial, the ethereal, the Olympian, the heaven of fire, the heaven of the stars, the crystalline, and the empyrean. The rational heaven is the just man, and he is so called for several reasons: first, by reason of the indwelling



of God, because as Heaven is the seat and dwelling of God, as we read in Isaias, *Heaven is My throne*, so likewise is the soul of the just man, wherefore the Book of Wisdom says that the soul of the just is the seat of wisdom; second, by reason of holy conversation, because holy men, by their conversation and desire, ever dwell in Heaven, wherefore the apostle says: 'Our conversation is in Heaven'; third, by reason of continuous operation, because as the heavens are continuously in motion, so also holy men move without ceasing in holy works. The intellectual heaven is the angel; and the angels are called heaven because they are like to the highest Heaven by reason of their dignity and excellence, whereof Dionysius, in the *Book of the Names of God*, says: 'These godlike minds have a being above all other beings and a life above all other things that live, and their intelligence and knowledge are above sense and reason, and more than any other being they desire the beautiful and the good, and participate therein.' The supersubstantial heaven is equality in the divine excellence, whence Christ came and whither He returned. Of this heaven the Psalm says: 'His going out is from the end of Heaven, and His circuit even to the end thereof.' Now Christ ascended above all the other heavens, unto this same supersubstantial Heaven. We know that He ascended above all the material heavens, from the words of the Psalm: 'Thy magnificence is elevated above the heavens.' And He mounted above all the material heavens and into the empyrean not as Elias, who went up in a fiery chariot into the sublunar region but did not go beyond it, but was translated to an earthly paradise, which is as high as the sublunar region but not higher. In this empyrean Heaven Christ dwells, and this is the especial and proper dwelling place of Christ and the angels and the saints, and the dwelling well befits the dwellers. For this Heaven excels above the others in dignity, eternity, location, and extent: and therefore it is the fitting dwelling place of Christ, Who excels above all the rational and intellectual heavens by His dignity, His eternity, His immutability, and the extent of His power. And fittingly the angels and the saints dwell therein, for this heaven is uniform, immobile, perfect in luminosity, immense in capacity; and the angels and saints were uniform in good works, immobile in love, luminous in faith and knowledge, capacious in receiving the Holy Ghost. And that Christ ascended above all the rational heavens, that is above all the saints, is clear from the words of the Cantic:

'Behold He cometh leaping upon the mountains, and skipping over the hills,' for the angels are called mountains, and the saints hills. And He ascended above all the intellectual heavens, namely the angels, for the Psalm says: 'Who makest the clouds Thy chariot; Who walkest upon the wings of the winds.' And that He ascended to the supersubstantial Heaven, that is to the equality of God, is seen from the words of Saint Mark: 'And the Lord Jesus, after He had spoken to them, was taken up into Heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God.' For the right hand of God is coequality with God. Thus Saint Bernard says: 'To my Lord, in a singular manner, the Lord promised and gave to sit at the right hand of His glory, for as much as He was equal in glory, in essence consubstantial, like by His generation, in majesty not inferior, in eternity not posterior.'

As to the seventh question, namely for what reasons Christ ascended, we may count nine fruits or benefits of His Ascension. The first is the bringing down of divine love: 'For if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.' To this Saint Augustine adds: 'If you cling to Me in the flesh, you shall not be able to receive the Spirit.' The second is a better knowledge of God: 'If you loved Me, you would indeed be glad, because I go to the Father: for the Father is greater than I.' Hence Augustine says: 'Therefore I take away this form of a slave, in which the Father is greater than I, in order that you may in another manner see God the Spirit.' The third fruit is the merit of faith, whereof Saint Leo says, in his sermon on the Ascension: 'Then a more enlightened faith begins to march with the stride of the spirit toward the Son in His equality with the Father, and no longer needs to handle Christ in His corporeal substance, in which He is less than the Father. For it is the strength of great minds to believe without hesitating those things which they do not see with their eyes, and to fix their desire upon that which is hidden from their sight.' And Augustine, in his *Confessions*, says: 'He hath rejoiced as a giant to run the way. For He did not tarry, but ran, crying out by word and deed, by His death and life and descent and ascension, crying out that we should come back to Him; and He withdrew from before our eyes that we might enter into our heart, and find Him.' The fourth fruit is our confidence, for He ascended to be our advocate with the Father; and well may we be confident, when we consider that we have such an advocate with the Father, as Saint John

writes: 'We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just, and He is the propitiation for our sins.' Of this confidence Saint Bernard says: 'O man, thou hast sure access to the Father, where the Mother stands before the Son and the Son before the Father, the Mother showing the Son her bosom and her breasts, the Son showing the Father His side and His wounds! None can therefore be rejected, where the marks of love so abound!' The fifth fruit is our own dignity, which in good sooth has reached its highest point, when our nature is exalted even to the right hand of God. Therefore the angels, seeing this dignity in men, no longer allowed men to adore them, as we read in the Apocalypse: 'I fell down before his feet to adore him. And he saith to me, See thou do it not. I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren'; and the *Gloss* adds: 'In the Old Law he allowed himself to be adored, but after the Lord's Ascension, seeing that man was exalted above him, he feared to be adored.' And Pope Leo, in his sermon on the Ascension, says: 'Today our human nature is lifted up above the height of all the heavenly Powers, and seated at the right hand of the Father, in order that the grace of God might be made more wonderful, when faith did not fail, nor hope falter, nor charity grow cool, although That which had proclaimed the reverence due to It was taken away from the sight of men.' The sixth fruit is the firmness of our hope, whereof the epistle to the Hebrews says: 'Having therefore a great High Priest that hath passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession'; and again: 'We may have the strongest comfort, who have fled for refuge to hold fast the hope set before us, which we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and firm, and which entereth in even within the veil, where the forerunner Jesus is entered for us.' And of this Saint Leo again says: 'Christ's Ascension is our exaltation; and whither the glory of the Head hath gone before, thither the hope of the body tendeth also.' The seventh fruit is the pointing out of the way. Hence the prophet Micheas says: 'He shall go up that shall open the way before them'; and Augustine says: 'The Saviour Himself is made a way unto thee! Arise and walk, thou knowest the way, be not slothful!' The eighth fruit is the opening of the gates of Heaven, for as the first Adam opened the gates of Hell, so the second opened the gates of Paradise. Hence the Church sings: *Tu devicto mortis aculeo*, Thou, having conquered the sting of death, hast opened the Kingdom of Heaven to

them that believe! The ninth fruit is the preparation of our place in Heaven: 'I go to prepare a place for you.' And Augustine says: 'Lord, prepare what Thou preparest; for Thou preparest us for Thyself and Thyself for us, when Thou preparest a place for Thyself in us and for us in Thyself.'

## THE HOLY GHOST

On this day the Holy Ghost was sent down upon the apostles in tongues of fire, as the Acts of the Apostles tell us. Concerning this mission eight things are to be considered: first, by whom He was sent; second, in how many ways He may be sent and was sent; third, at what time He was sent; fourth, how many times He was sent; fifth, in what manner He was sent; sixth, to whom He was sent; seventh, for what reasons He was sent; eighth, by what means He was sent.

As to the first question, namely by whom He was sent, we may note that the Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit gave and sent Himself. Of the Father, it is written: 'But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things.' Of the Son: 'But if I go I will send Him to you.' Nevertheless, the Holy Ghost gave and sent Himself, as John seems to suggest when he says: 'But when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will teach you all truth.' For, since the Holy Ghost is God, He is rightly said to give and send Himself. And that the Holy Ghost is God, Ambrose shows in his book *Of the Holy Ghost*, saying: 'The manifest glory of His godhead is proven by four things. We know Him to be God, for He is without sin, He forgives sins, He is not a creature but the Creator, and He adores not but is adored.' And Pope Leo says: 'The Holy Ghost inspires us with faith, teaches us knowledge, is the source of love, the seal of chastity, and the cause of all salvation.'

As to the second question, namely, in how many ways He may be sent and was sent. The Holy Ghost is sent in two ways, visibly and invisibly; invisibly, when He comes secretly into the hearts of holy men, and visibly, when He is made manifest by some visible sign. Of the first mission John says: 'The Spirit breatheth where he will; and thou hearest his voice, but thou knowest not whence he

cometh, and whither he goeth.' The visible mission is when He is shown by some sign; and indeed, the Holy Ghost is manifested in a fivefold manner. First, He appeared in the form of a dove at the baptism of Christ. Second, He appeared in the form of a bright cloud above Christ transfigured, as Matthew says: 'As he was yet speaking, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them.' Third, He appeared in the form of a breath, as John says: 'He breathed on them, and he said to them, receive ye the Holy Ghost.' Fourth, He appeared in the form of fire, and fifth, in the form of a tongue; and in this twofold form, He appeared this day.

As to the third question, namely, at what time He was sent. Let us note that He was sent on the fiftieth day after Easter, that we might understand that from the Holy Ghost comes the perfection of the law, eternal reward, and the remission of sins. From Him comes the perfection of the law because, as we read in the *Gloss*, the Law was given in fire on the fiftieth day after the immolation of the lamb, and in the New Testament, the Holy Ghost came down in fire on the fiftieth day after the Pasch of Christ. From Him comes eternal reward, whence the *Gloss* says: 'As the forty days which Christ passed with His disciples after His Resurrection represent the Church on earth, so the fiftieth day, whereon the Holy Ghost is given, signifies the coin of the heavenly reward.' The remission of sins comes from the Holy Spirit, whence the *Gloss* says: 'An indulgence is granted at the jubilee every fifty years, and sins are remitted by the Holy Ghost. In the spiritual jubilee sinners are loosed from their guilt, debts are remitted, exiles are recalled to the fatherland, the lost heritage is restored, and slaves, that is, men sold into sin, are freed from their bondage.' So says the *Gloss*.

As to the fourth question, namely, how many times He was sent to the apostles. Be it known that, according to the *Gloss*, He was given to them three times; before the Passion, after the Resurrection, and after the Ascension. The first time He was given to enable them to work miracles, the second time to remit sins, and the third time to confirm their hearts. The first infusion of the Holy Spirit was when Christ sent the apostles to preach, giving them power to drive out demons and to heal the sick. For these miracles are worked by the Holy Ghost, as we read in Matthew: 'But if I by the Spirit of God cast out devils, then is the Kingdom of God come upon you.' But it does not follow that whosoever has the Holy

Ghost may work miracles, for Gregory says: 'Miracles do not make the saint, but make him known.' Nor does it follow that whosoever works miracles has the Holy Ghost, because the wicked also claim to have worked miracles, saying: 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and cast out devils in thy name, and done many miracles in thy name?' The second time Christ gave them the Holy Ghost when He breathed upon them and said: 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain they are retained.' For no one can remit sin, either as to the guilt which is in the soul, or as to the penalty of eternal punishment, or as to the offense to God, these things being remitted only by the infusion of grace and by the virtue of penance. However, the priest is said to absolve because he declares that the fault is remitted, and commutes the penalty to a temporal punishment, and also takes away part of the temporal punishment. The third time He was given to them on this day, when their hearts were strengthened in such wise that they feared not any torture. For, as the Psalm says: 'All the power of them by the spirit of his mouth.' Augustine says: 'Such is the grace of the Holy Ghost that it dispels sadness, uproots pernicious desires, and calms all fear and anxiety.' Pope Leo says: 'The apostles yearned for the Holy Ghost, not that He might then dwell in the saints for the first time, but that He might inflame their hearts, already consecrated to Himself, with a greater fervour, and might fill them to a greater fulness; not commencing but increasing His gifts, not producing a new effect, although enriching His munificence.'

As to the fifth question, namely, in what manner He was sent, we may note that He was sent in tongues of fire. Concerning this, three things are to be seen; why He was sent in tongues and fire, why in fire rather than in another element, and why in tongues rather than in another member. Of the first we may say that He appeared in fiery tongues for a threefold reason, namely, that He might inspire them with words of fire, and that they might preach a law of fire, that is, the law of love. Of these two, Bernard says: 'The Holy Ghost came in fiery tongues that they might speak words of fire in the tongues of all peoples, and that fiery tongues might preach a law of fire.' The third reason was that they might know that the Holy Ghost, Who is fire, spoke through them, and might not doubt of

this, nor attribute the conversion of others to themselves, and that all might hear their words as the words of God. Of the second we may say that He was sent in the species of fire for several reasons. The first is that He brought a sevenfold gift; for like fire, the Holy Spirit humbles the haughty by the gift of fear, melts what is hard by the gift of piety, lightens up the darkness by the gift of knowledge, confirms the fluctuating by the gift of counsel, strengthens the weak by the gift of fortitude, purifies the ore of dross by the gift of understanding, and reaches to the heights by the gift of wisdom. The second is taken from the nature of love. For love is like fire in that it is ever in motion, and so the love of the Holy Ghost causes those whom it fills to be ever active in good works, whence Gregory says: 'The love of God is never still. If it be love, it does great things; if great things be not done, it is not love.' Furthermore, of all the elements fire has least of matter and most of form. So the love of the Holy Spirit causes those whom it fills to have little of the love of earthly things and much of the love of heavenly and spiritual things. Of the third we may say that the Holy Ghost appeared in tongues rather than in the shape of another member for the reason that the tongue is the member which is set on fire by Hell, being difficult to control, but being of much use when well controlled. Therefore, since the tongue was inflamed by hell fire, it needed the fire of the Holy Ghost; being difficult to control, it needed the grace of the Holy Ghost; being of much use when well controlled, it needed the rule of the Holy Ghost.

As to the sixth question, namely, to whom the Spirit was sent. Here we may note that He was sent upon the apostles, who were clean vessels, and apt to receive the Holy Ghost by seven virtues which were found in them. Firstly, they were quiet in spirit, whence it is said: 'When the days of Pentecost were accomplished,' this being the day of rest. Secondly, they were united in love, whence it is said: 'They were all together,' and had but one heart and one soul. Thirdly, they were in a secret place, whence it is said that they were in one place, namely, in the cenacle. And we read in Osee: 'Behold I will allure her, and will lead her into the wilderness: and I will speak to her heart.' Fourthly, they were zealous in prayer, whence it is said before: 'These were persevering with one mind in prayer.' And therefore we sing:

*Apostolis orantibus  
 Repente de cælo sonus  
 Deum venisse nuntiat.*

Fifthly, they were endowed with humility, wherefore it is said that they were sitting; and the Psalm says: 'Thou sendest forth springs in the vales: between the midst of the hills the waters shall pass,' which means, Thou shalt give the grace of the Holy Ghost to the humble. Sixthly, they were joined together in peace, because they were in Jerusalem, which is interpreted, 'vision of peace.' Seventhly, they were lifted up in contemplation because they received the Holy Ghost in the upper room, whence the *Gloss* says: 'Who-soever desires the Holy Spirit mounts from the house of the flesh and climbs up by the contemplation of the soul.'

As to the seventh question, namely, for what reasons He was sent. Here we note six reasons which appear from the text of John: 'The Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you.' Firstly He is sent to console the disconsolate, for He is called Paraclete, that is, the consoler; secondly, to give life to the dead, whence He is called Spirit, because it is the spirit that quickeneth; thirdly, to sanctify the unclean, whence He is called holy, for as it is the spirit that quickens so it is the holy that sanctifies and cleanses; fourthly, to establish love among those whom discord and hatred divide, whence He is called Father, since by His nature He loves us, as John says: 'For the Father himself loveth you'; fifthly, to save the just, whence it is said: 'In my name,' because the name Jesus means salvation; sixthly, to teach the unknowing, whence it is said: 'He will teach you all things.'

As to the eighth question, namely, by what means He was sent. We may say that He is given or was sent in the primitive Church first through prayer, whence: 'Jesus also being baptized and praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Ghost descended upon him'; second by devout and attentive hearing of the word of God, whence: 'While Peter was yet speaking these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the word'; third through good works, as appears in the laying on of hands, whence: 'Then they laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost.' Or else, the laying on of hands signifies the absolution which is given in confession.



## THE DIFFERENCE IN TIME

Now that we have considered the feasts that have occurred within the period of reconciliation, which is observed from Easter to Pentecost, let us speak of the feasts that occur in the period of pilgrimage, observed from the octave of Pentecost until Advent. But this period does not always begin at this time, for it depends upon the time of Easter, which is a movable feast.

### SAINT URBAN

MAY 25

Urban comes from *urbanitas*, and means an honourable, polite person. Or it comes from *ur*, light or fire, and *banal*, answer. For he was a beacon in his honourable conduct; a fire in his ardent love; an answer in his teaching. He was a beacon or a light because light is pleasant to look upon, ethereal in essence, comes from Heaven, and is of great benefit. And so too this saint was pleasant in his conduct, ethereal in his disdain of earthly things, heavenly in his contemplation, and of great benefit in his preaching.

Urban was the successor of Pope Callistus, and during his pontificate there befell a great persecution of the Christians. But finally the office of emperor fell to Alexander, whose mother Mammaea had been converted to Christianity by Origen. This holy woman persuaded her son, by her supplications, to put an end to the persecution.

Meanwhile the prefect Almachius, who had beheaded Saint Cecilia, continued to pursue the Christians relentlessly. Upon his order Saint Urban was sought after persistently, and finally discovered, through a denunciation by a certain Carpasius, in a cave where he was hiding with three priests and three deacons, all of whom were thrown into prison. The prefect then summoned the pope, and upbraided him for having led five thousand persons astray, among whom were the blasphemer Cecilia and two men of high rank, Tiburtius and Valerianus. Then he called upon him to hand over Cecilia's treasure. But Urban replied: 'It seems to me that thy cruelty toward the saints springs rather from thy greed than from thy devotion to the gods. Be it known to thee therefore that the wealth of Saint

Cecilia has long since flown to Heaven by the hands of the poor! The prefect then ordered Urban and his companions to be beaten with rods laden with lead. And when the pontiff called upon the Lord by His name of Elyon, the prefect said with a sneer: 'The old man would appear learned, using words which are unknown to us!' But as the martyrs remained unshaken in their faith, they were led back to prison, and there Urban baptized the gaoler Anolinus, and three tribunes who had been sent to guard him. Learning of this, Almachius had Anolinus beheaded, and then ordered Urban and his companions to burn incense before an idol; but at the prayer of Urban, the idol came crashing down from its pedestal, and crushed the twenty-two priests who were engaged in worshipping it. Again the Christians were showered with blows, and ordered to sacrifice before an idol; but they spat upon it instead. Then they made the sign of the cross upon their foreheads, gave the kiss of peace each to the other, and submitted to martyrdom, in the reign of the Emperor Alexander, which began about the year 220.

At once Carpasius, the man who had denounced them, was seized by the Devil; and before he was strangled to death, he began to blaspheme against his gods and to praise the Christians, despite himself. Thereupon his wife Armenia, his daughter Lucina, and his entire household received baptism at the hands of the holy priest Fortunatus, and then piously buried the bodies of the martyrs.

## SAINT PETRONILLA

MAY 31

Petronilla, whose life is told us by Saint Marcellus, was the daughter of the apostle Saint Peter, who, judging her too comely of aspect, obtained from God that she should be stricken with a fever. But one day when his disciples were with him, Titus said to him: 'Master, thou who healest all the sick, why dost thou not make Petronilla to arise from her bed?' And Peter answered: 'Because I deem that it is better so.' This does not mean, however, that Peter was without the power to cure her, for immediately he said to her: 'Arise, Petronilla, and make haste to wait upon us!' The maiden was cured instantly, and came to serve them. But when she had fin-

ished, her father said to her: 'Petronilla, get thee back to thy bed!' Back she went, and again the fever seized her. And later, when she was beginning to be perfect in the love of God, her father restored her to perfect health of body.

Then a noble named Flaccus, being enamoured of her beauty, asked her hand in marriage. And she answered: 'Why comest thou with knights in armour to a helpless maid? If thou desirest to take me to wife, send maidens to lead me to thy house when three days have elapsed!' In the meantime Petronilla began to fast and to pray, receive the holy Communion, lay down in her bed, and after three days surrendered her soul to God.

Then Flaccus, seeing that he had been hoodwinked, addressed his attentions to one of Petronilla's companions, whose name was Felicula, and charged her either to become his wife or to sacrifice to the idols. The damsel refused to do either of these things, and Flaccus cast her into prison, where she lay for seven days without food or drink. Then he commanded her to be tortured on the rack, and then thrown into a *cloaca*. Saint Nicodemus retrieved her remains and gave them burial; and for this he in his turn was imprisoned, beaten with thongs weighted with lead, and thrown into the Tiber, whence the clerk Justus recovered his body and buried it with honour.

## SAINT PETER THE EXORCIST

JUNE 2

Peter the Exorcist had been imprisoned by a prefect who was persecuting the Christians. Now the daughter of the gaoler, whose name was Archemius, was possessed of a devil who tormented her sorely. And one day when her father was complaining of this to his prisoner, Peter told him that if he would believe in Christ, his daughter would forthwith be made whole. Archemius replied: 'If thy Master has the power to cure my daughter, why is it that He is powerless to deliver thee, who sufferest such pains for Him?' 'My God has certes the power to deliver me,' said Peter, 'but He wills that by these passing ills we come into eternal glory.' 'Well then,' said Archemius, 'I shall put double chains upon thee: and if thy

God frees thee, and cures my daughter, I shall believe in Christ!' And that very night Peter was freed from his double chains; and he appeared, clothed in white and holding a cross in his hand, to Archemius, who prostrated himself at his feet. Then, finding his daughter healed, the gaoler received baptism with all his house; and several of the prisoners likewise were converted, and were baptized by the priest Marcellinus. Learning of this, the prefect caused all these prisoners to be haled before him. And Archemius, calling them together and kissing their hands, told them that those who feared martyrdom could take their freedom.

Meanwhile the prefect, being informed that Marcellinus and Peter had baptized their companions, had them placed in separate dungeons. Marcellinus was stripped of his garments, and forced to lie upon broken glass, without food or drink. Peter was locked in the uppermost chamber of a tower, a cell without light or air, and likewise left to die of hunger. But an angel freed them both, and brought them back to Archemius, commanding them to appear before the prefect after seven days, and to comfort their fellow prisoners in the interval. But when the prefect did not find them in their cells, he summoned Archemius; and when the latter refused to sacrifice to the idols, he ordered him to be entombed alive with his wife. At these tidings the two saints came forth from their hiding place and joined Archemius in his cell, where Marcellinus offered the Mass. Then they said to the unbelievers: 'See you that we could have freed Archemius, and ourselves have remained in hiding, but we chose to do neither of these things!' Then the pagans, in anger, slew Archemius with swords, and stoned his wife and daughter. Marcellinus and Peter were beheaded at the entrance to a forest, which even today is called the Black Forest, in memory of their martyrdom. A certain Dorotheus saw their souls, all arrayed in white silk and precious stones, being carried up to Heaven by angels, whereupon he too became a Christian, and later expired in the Lord. The martyrdom of Saints Peter and Marcellinus took place in the reign of the Emperor Diocletian, who began to rule in the year of Our Lord 287.

## SAINTS PRIMUS AND FELICIANUS

JUNE 9

Primus means the highest or the greatest. Felicianus comes from *felix anus*, a happy old man. Primus was high and great in his worthiness when he suffered martyrdom, in the miracles he worked, in saintliness, for his life was perfect, in happiness, for he participated in heavenly glory. Felicianus is called an old man not only because he was advanced in years, but also because of his venerability, his mature wisdom, and the severity of his conduct.

Primus and Felicianus were denounced to Diocletian by the priests of the temples, who declared that they could obtain nothing from the gods as long as these two men refused to offer sacrifice. The twain were then cast into prison, but an angel came and set them free. Again brought before the emperor, and persisting in their profession of faith, they were cruelly beaten with leathern thongs. Then the prefect exhorted Felicianus, who was a man far advanced in years, to take thought for his age and to sacrifice to the gods. But Felicianus answered: 'For thirty of the eighty years that I have lived, I have known the truth, and chosen to live for my God, Who well can free me from thy hands!' Then the prefect had him bound securely, and nails were driven into his hands and feet. And he said to him: 'So shalt thou remain until thou hast yielded!' And when the martyr kept his joyous countenance, he was tortured anew, and all food was withheld from him. Then the prefect summoned Primus and said to him: 'Give ear, for thy brother Felicianus has yielded to the emperor's decree, and is now held in great honour in the palace. Do thou then follow his example!' But Primus responded: 'Albeit thou art the son of the Devil, thou hast spoken the truth in part, in saying that my brother has yielded to the decree of the supreme Emperor, who is God!' Enraged, the prefect ordered his flanks to be scorched, and boiling lead to be poured into his mouth, before the eyes of Felicianus, whom he hoped to frighten. But Primus swallowed the lead with relish, as though it were cool water. Then two lions were launched upon them, but the beasts stretched out at their feet, and lay as quietly as lambs. Two bears were sent upon the martyrs in like manner, and behaved as the lions had done. Twelve thousand people were witnesses of this spectacle, and five

hundred of them were converted to Christ. Then the prefect had the two saints beheaded, and ordered their bodies to be thrown as fodder to the dogs and the birds. But the animals durst not touch them, and the two bodies were gathered up by the Christians, and piously buried. They suffered in the year of Our Lord 287.

## SAINT BARNABAS

JUNE 11

Barnabas is translated as the son of him who comes, or the son of consolation, or the son of the prophet, or the son who brings together. Four times he was called son, because his sonship was fourfold; for, in the Scriptures, he was called son because of his rebirth, his education, his imitation, and his adoption. He was reborn in Christ through baptism; educated through the gospels; he imitated Christ in his martyrdom; and was received by Him as a son with heavenly reward. So much for himself; but for the others he was a coming, a consolation, a prophet, and an enclosure. A coming in that he came everywhere and preached, which we know because he was Paul's companion. He was a consolation to the poor and the disconsolate; he gave alms to the poor, and to the disconsolate he sent letters at the behest of the apostle. He was a prophet since he had the gift of prophecy. He was an enclosure since he united many in the faith and brought them together, which we see in his mission to Antioch. Of these four virtues, we read in the Acts of the Apostles: 'For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of the faith'; a man, that is manly, which refers to the first; good, which refers to the second; full of the Holy Ghost, which refers to the third; full of faith, which refers to the fourth. His cousin, John, also called Mark, has written his passion, particularly the portion from John's vision almost to the end. Bede translated it from Greek into Latin, or so it is said.

Barnabas the Levite was a native of Cyprus and one of the seventy-two disciples of the Lord. He is much extolled in the *Acts of the Apostles*. He was excellently informed and ordered in relation to himself, to God, and to his neighbour. With regard to himself, he was properly ordered in the three powers of reason, desire, and will.

For his reason was illumined by the light of knowledge, whence the Acts say: 'There were in the church which was at Antioch, prophets and doctors, among whom was Barnabas.' His desire was cleansed of the dust of earthly attachments, for again we read in the Acts: 'Joseph, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, having land, sold it, and brought the price, and laid it at the feet of the Apostles.' Whence the *Gloss* says: 'He shows that one should put off what one avoids touching, and teaches that gold should be trampled, by laying it at the feet of the apostles.' His will was strengthened by his great righteousness, and this, in that he manfully undertook the arduous, persevered in deeds of strength, and suffered adversity steadfastly. He manfully undertook the arduous, as we see when he accepted the task of converting the great city of Antioch; and again, because when Paul came to Jerusalem after his conversion and wished to join the disciples, and all fled from him as lambs from the wolf, Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He persevered in deeds of strength because he castigated his body and mortified it with fasting. Whence the Acts say of him and certain others: 'They were ministering to the Lord and fasting.' He also suffered adversity steadfastly, as the apostles testify of him, saying: 'Our well-beloved Barnabas and Paul, men that have given their lives for the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ.'

Secondly, he was properly ordered with relation to God because he submitted all to God's authority, majesty, and goodness. To God's authority, because he did not of himself assume the office of preaching, but wished to receive it from the authority of God, as the *Acts* say: 'The Holy Ghost said to them: separate me Paul and Barnabas, for the work whereunto I have taken them.' He deferred to God's majesty, for, as we see in the *Acts*, when certain men wished to attribute divine majesty to him, and to offer him sacrifice as to God, calling him Jove because he was the elder, and Paul Mercury, because he was prudent and eloquent, at once Barnabas and Paul, rending their clothes, cried out: 'Ye men, why do ye these things? We also are mortals, men like unto you, preaching to you to be converted from these vain things to the living God.' He deferred to God's goodness, for the *Acts* tell us that when certain converts among the Jews wished to restrict and diminish the goodness of the grace of God, whereby, and not by the Law, we are freely saved, saying that this was not sufficient without circumcision, Paul and Barnabas man-

fully withstood them, and showed that the goodness of God's grace sufficed, without circumcision; and they further referred this question to the apostles, and obtained letters from the apostles against the error.

He was properly ordered with relation to his neighbour, because he fed his flock by word, by works of mercy, and by example. He fed them by word, because he zealously announced the word of God, whence the *Acts* say: 'And Paul and Barnabas continued at Antioch, teaching and preaching, with many others, the word of God.' We see this also from the great multitude of men whom he converted at Antioch, so that there for the first time the disciples were called Christians. He fed them by example, because his life was a mirror of holiness and a model of piety to all. For he was manly, devout, and strenuous in his every deed, adorned by the excellence of his ways, filled with every grace of the Holy Ghost, noble in all virtue and faith. Of these four qualities, the *Acts* say: 'They sent Barnabas as far as Antioch,' and again, 'He exhorted them all with purpose of heart to continue in the Lord. For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith.' He fed his flock with works of mercy, and this in two ways.

For the works of mercy are twofold, namely, the temporal, which consist in ministering to the needs of others, and the spiritual, which consist in the forgiveness of offenses. The first Barnabas showed when he gave alms to the brethren who were in Jerusalem. Of this the *Acts* say: 'Agabus, rising up, signified by the Spirit that there should be a great famine over the whole world, which came to pass under Claudius. And the disciples, every man according to his ability, purposed to send relief to the brethren who dwelt in Jerusalem: which also they did, sending it to the ancients, by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.'

The second was shown when Barnabas forgave John who was surnamed Mark, for when his disciple took his leave of Barnabas and Paul, and then returning sought forgiveness, Barnabas forgave him and accepted him again as a disciple, whereas Paul refused to do so. In this both men acted with a pious intention: for Barnabas gave his pardon out of Christian charity, and Paul's unbending conduct was dictated by justice. And moreover, this separation of the two saints was no doubt inspired from on high, in order that, by taking different ways, they might preach to a greater number of



people. And when Barnabas came to the city of Icona, John, his companion, saw in a vision a man of resplendent aspect, who said to him: 'John, be firm in the faith, for soon thy name shall no longer be John, but Sublime!' The disciple recounted this vision to his master, who said to him: 'Make known the vision to no man, for the Lord appeared to me also in the night, exhorted me to be strong, and promised that soon I should come into eternal glory!' And in that same night, Saint Paul, who was preaching at Antioch, saw in a dream an angel who said to him: 'Make haste, and go to Jerusalem!' And since Barnabas was desirous of returning to the island of Cyprus to see his parents once more, and Paul was making ready for the journey to Jerusalem, the Holy Spirit disposed that they should bid each other godspeed in the following manner. Paul repeated to Barnabas what the angel had said to him, and Barnabas replied: 'May the will of God be done! As for me, I go to Cyprus to end my days there, and shall see thee no more!' Then he fell weeping at Paul's feet; and the latter, full of compassion, said to him: 'Weep not, for it is likewise God's will that thou shouldst go to Cyprus. For the angel also told me last night that I should not oppose thy going, since thou art to work many miracles in Cyprus, and shalt win the crown of martyrdom.'

Thereupon Barnabas betook himself to Cyprus with John. He carried with him the gospel of Saint Matthew; and by placing this gospel on the heads of the sick, he cured a great number, with the help of God. And as they were setting out from Cyprus, they came face to face with Elymas the sorcerer, whom Saint Paul had deprived of his sight for a time. This man stayed the progress of the two Christians, and hindered them from going to Paphos. But one day, beneath the walls of that city, Barnabas saw a multitude of men and women celebrating a feast, and running about naked. So wroth was he that he cursed the temple of these pagans, and instantly the temple fell in ruins, crushing a large number of pagans in its fall.

Finally Barnabas went to Salamina, where the aforesaid Elymas stirred up a riot against him. The Jews of the city laid hold of the saint, overwhelmed him with insults, and handed him over to the judge, demanding that he be punished. Some time later it was learned that a certain Eusebius, of the family of Nero, a man of great prestige, would shortly arrive in Salamina. Then the Jews, fear-

ing that this high official would snatch Barnabas from their hands and set him free, hurriedly fastened a noose about his neck, dragged him out of the city, and there burnt him alive. Then, their malice being not yet sated, they enclosed his bones in a leaden urn, with the intention of throwing it into the sea. But John, his companion, arose in the night, and with two other disciples took possession of the relics, and buried them secretly in a crypt. There they reposed until about the year 500, in the reign of Zeno and the pontificate of Gelasius. Then they made known their presence, and were thus brought to light. We may add that Saint Dorotheus maintains that Saint Barnabas, before he went to Antioch, preached in Rome and was elected bishop of Milan.

## SAINT BASIL

JUNE 14

Saint Basil, whose life was written by Amphilochius, the bishop of Icona, was a venerable bishop and an eminent doctor.

As for the degree of his holiness, it was made known to a hermit named Ephrem in a vision. This Ephrem, being rapt in ecstasy, saw a column of fire whose summit reached up to Heaven, and heard a voice from on high, saying: 'Basil is as tall as this column!' Thereupon the hermit, desirous of knowing so great a man, repaired to the city on the feast of the Epiphany. But when he saw the bishop vested in the white stole and officiating in the midst of his clergy, he said to himself: 'Surely I have made this journey in vain, for this man, living as he does surrounded by such honours, cannot be as holy as I thought. I cannot believe that a man who lives in the midst of so much pomp, is looked upon by Heaven as a column of fire, being esteemed more than we who bear the fardel of the seasons and the weather in our hermitages!' But Basil, divining his thought, had Ephrem brought to him, and Ephrem saw a tongue of fire issuing from his mouth. Then he said to him: 'Yea, Basil, thou art great, yea verily, thou art a column of fire, and the Holy Ghost indeed speaks by thy mouth'; and he further said to the bishop: 'I pray thee, holy father, obtain for me that I may speak Greek!' And Basil answered: 'Strange indeed is the thing that thou askest!' But



**L SE DISTINGVE** Tutol tempo de l'anno in quatro parte ouer tempi cioè nel tempo dela deuotione:renouatione:ouer reuocatione:reconciliatione: & peregrinatione.Fu adunque el tempo de la deuotione da Adā cioè da poi chel se dipartì da dio:& durò infino a Moysē. Onde la chiesa reprē/ senza quello tempo dala septuagesima per infino a pascha:& alhora legese el libro Genesi nel quale se po ne la deuotione di primi parenti. Incominciò el tēpo dela renouatione ouer reuocatione:da Moysē & durò per infino alla natiuità di christo:nelqual tempo per li propheti sono stati reuocati & renouati li homini alla fede.Sichè la chiesa rappresenta quel tēpo dal aduentu del signore per infino ala natiuità de christo.Et in tale tempo legese Isaiā doue apertamēte fa mentione di questa reuocatione.El tempo dela reconciliaōe è quel tempo nelqual per christo reconciliati siamo.Onde la chiesa reprēta quel tempo da pascha infino ale pentecoste. Et alhora legese apocalipsi nelqual libro aperta & pianamente fafe mentione del mysterio di questa tale reconciliaōe. El tempo dela peregrinatione sē el tempo dela uita presente nel quale sempre peregrini siamo & sempre in combattimento.Sichè la chiesa reprēta questo tal tempo da loctaua dele pentecoste infino al aduēto.Et in tal tempo legese li libri di Re & di Machabeimelquali fafe mentione de diuerse & molte battaglie per lequale significase la nostra spirital battaglia.Ma quel tēpo che è dalla natiuita del signore p infino alla septuagesima contienēte parte sotol tempo dela reconciliaōe elqual è tempo di leticia che è da naxale per infino al octaua dela epiphania parte sotol tēpo dela peregrinatione che dela octaua dela epiphania per infino ala septuagesima.Onde questa quadruplice uariatione de tempi puote essere appropriata quasi ale distinctione & uariatione di quattro tempi.La prima come linuerno se referisse al primo tempo:la primauera al secondo:lestate al terzo:lautunno al quarto:si che sufficientemente appare la ragione dela appropriatione. Seconda,secundo le quattro parte del giorno chela notte se referisca al primo la matina al secondo:el mezo di al terzo:& la sera al quarto:& benchè prima fusse la deuotione che la reuocatione niētedimeno la chiesa principalmente incomincia li officii soi nel tempo dela renouatione che dela deuotione cioè nel aduentu facendo questo molto più conueniētemente che ne la septuagesima:& questo fa per doe ragione.Prima aciochè non paraincominciare dal errore. Impertho chē lei tiene la cosa & non sequita lordine del tempo secondo che spesse fiare fanno li euangelisti.La seconda ragione è conscioia che per lo aduenimento de christo sono stati renouate tutte le cose. Per laquātoia eniam questo tempo e dicto tempo di renouatione secondo si lege al terzo capitulo dela apocalipsi.Ecco che io facio tutte cose noue. Congruamēte adunque la chiesa in questo tempo dela renoua

tionē renoua tutti li officii: & aciochè adunque sia obseruato lordine del tempo diuiso & distincto dala chiesa.In prima faremo mentione de quelle feste che occorreno infiral tempo dela renouatione representato dala chiesa dal aduentu infino ala natiuità del signore.Secondo faremo mentione de quelle feste occorrente fral tempo contenuto parte sotol tempo dela reconciliaōe parte sotol tempo dela peregrinatione representato dala chiesa dala natiuità te del signor per infino ala septuagesima.Tertio faremo mentione de quelle feste occorrente fral tēpo dela deuotione representato dala chiesa dala septuagesima per infino a pascha.Quarto de quelle feste che occorreno fral tempo dela reconciliaōe el qual tēpo la chiesa rappresenta dapascha per infino aloctaua dele pentecoste.Quinto faremo mentione de quelle feste occorrente in fral tempo dela peregrinatione che la chiesa rappresenta da loctaua dele pentecoste per infino al aduentu.

Finito è il Prologo.

Incomincia el libro intitulado legendario de sancti composto per el reuerendissimo patre frate Iacobo de Voragine de lordine de predicatori Archiepiscopo de Genoua.



**ER. Q VATRO** septimane se celebra laduēto del signor & questo significar ef serui quatro aduenti cioè nela carne: nela morte:& nela morte: & al di del iudicio. Lultima d'ung septimana tutta non se adipie iperò che la gloria di sancti laque se dara nel iustimo aduēto nō harà giamai fine. Da qsto etiā uiene chel primo responsoio della prima dominica del aduēto depuato alla gloria patri in se cōtiente quatro uersicōi dimostri li predicti quatro aduenti.liche a cui più conuenga el prudente lettore attenda.Et benchè laduēto sia quadripartito niētedimeno la chiesa specialmēte pare che faccia memoria de duo aduenti cioè del aduentu nela carne & de laduēto nel iudicio secondo appare nel officio de esso tempo.Da questo etiā uiene che lo ieiunio che se fa nel aduēto parte è de exultatione & parte de mestitia.Onde quāto p ragione del aduēto in carne si dice ieiunio de exultatione & letitia & quāto per ragione del aduēto al iudicio si dice ieiunio de mestitia:& per dimostrare questo la chiesa canta a quel tēpo alquāti cācio de leticia & questo per rispetto del aduēto dela misericordia & exultatione & al quāti depone & lassa & questo per rispetto del aduēto dela seuerità iustitia & merore.Se può adunque uedere esser doi aduenti de christo in carne che e la op



he prayed for him, and at once Ephrem was able to speak in the Greek tongue.

Another hermit, seeing Basil pontificating in the church in his ceremonial robes, viewed him with contempt, thinking that this outward show was pleasing to the bishop. But at this moment he heard a voice say to him: 'Thou takest more pleasure in stroking thy cat's tail in thy hermitage, than Basil takes in the display of his dignity.'

The Emperor Valens, who was partial to the Arians, gave them a church which he had taken away from the Catholics. Then Basil came and said to him: 'Sire, it is written that the honour of the king loves justice. Why then hast thou allowed the Catholics to be despoiled of their church to the Arians' profit?' 'Comest thou again to insult me?' cried the emperor; 'this is unworthy of thee, Basil!' 'It is worthy of me to die, if need be, for justice,' Basil answered. Then Demosthenes, the steward of the emperor's table and a partisan of the Arians, began to inveigh against him. And Basil said to him: 'Friend, it is thy business to give thought to the emperor's food, and not to cook the divine dogmas!' At this the steward, covered with confusion, fell silent. And the emperor said: 'Basil, go, and be arbiter between the two factions, but do not allow thyself to be drawn to one side by thy love of the humble people!' Then Basil went to the place where Catholics and Arians were gathered. He caused the doors of the church to be closed, and ordered each of the factions to seal them with its seal, proposing that the church should belong to the party which should succeed in opening the church by its prayers. This was agreeable to all, and the Arians prayed for three days and three nights, and then came to view the doors of the church; but they were still closed. Then Basil led his clergy in procession to the church, and, after praying, lightly touched the doors with the end of his pastoral crook, and ordered them to open: and in an instant the doors swung open. And the church was returned to the Catholics.

The *Tripartite History* relates that the emperor promised great rewards to Basil if he would be converted to Arianism. But the bishop made answer: 'Only a child would yield to such reasoning; for the least knowledge of the things of God shows that the dogmas of faith cannot be altered in one jot or tittle!' Then the emperor set himself to write the bishop's sentence of exile. But three times the

pen broke in his fingers, and the third time his hand began to tremble violently, so that the emperor was put to shame, and tore up the decree.

A holy man named Heradius had an only daughter whom he wished to consecrate to the Lord. But the Devil, in his hatred of humankind, kindled a fierce desire for the maiden in one of Heradius' slaves. And the slave, perceiving that it was impossible for him to share the couch of a maid so noble, went to a sorcerer and promised him a goodly sum if he would come to his aid. And the sorcerer said to him: 'I can do nothing for thee. But if thou desirest it, I shall recommend thee to the Devil my master; and if thou wilt do as he tells thee, thou shalt have thy wish!' And the youth replied: 'Whatever he says I shall do.' Then the sorcerer wrote a letter to the Devil, which the youth was to bear to him, in which was written: 'Since it is my duty, Lord, with zeal and despatch to draw the Christians from their faith and lead them to thee, that thy portion may grow daily, I have sent to thee this youth who is on fire with love for a certain maiden, and I beg of thee to accomplish his desire, so that I may thereby win greater renown and be enabled to gather others unto thee.' And giving him the letter, the mage said: 'Take thy stand at midnight upon the tomb of a pagan, and call upon the demons, holding this letter aloft, and soon they will be with thee.' All this the young man did, and soon he saw the Prince of Darkness appear, surrounded by a horde of demons. And Satan, having read the letter, said to him: 'Thou who desirest that I do thy will, dost thou believe in me?' 'Lord, I believe in thee!' answered the slave. 'And dost thou renounce thy former master, Christ?' asked the Devil. 'I renounce Him!' said the slave. But the Devil said: 'You Christians cannot be trusted! When ye have need of me, ye come to me: and when ye have gratified your wish, ye deny me again, and go back to your Christ. And He, always forgiving, fails not to welcome you. But if thou wilt have me work thy will, then must thou put down in writing that thou renouncest Christ, and thy baptism, and the Christian faith, to become my servant.' The slave immediately wrote as he was told, and gave the screed to the Devil. Then Satan despatched to the maiden the demons who were masters of impurity, ordering them to arouse her to love the young slave. And they wrought so well that the maid writhed on the ground, and entreated her father in a piteous voice:

'Father, have pity on me, for I am in sorry plight of the love I have for one of our slaves! Show me thy fatherly kindness, and allow me to be united to this young man whom I love! And if thou wilt not, I shall die before thine eyes, and thine shall be the guilt in the day of judgement!' The father was beside himself with grief. 'Unhappy me,' said he, 'what has befallen my daughter? Who has made away with my treasure? Who has snuffed out the soft light of mine eyes? My child, I wished to give thee to thy heavenly Spouse, and thus to assure my own salvation as well as thine. And now a fleshly love has driven thee mad! Ah, my dearest daughter, allow me to unite thee to the Lord as I had planned!' But the maid cried the more that if her father did not give her her will, she would die of grief. And she wept bitterly, and fell to raving, so that her father, in his despair, and following the advice of his friends, yielded to her desire and married her to the slave, after bequeathing all his goods to her.

But soon the neighbours told the young woman that her husband never entered the church, nor made the sign of the cross, nor prayed, and that doubtless he was not a Christian. Hearing this, the damsel was terrified. She spoke of the matter with her husband, and when he made show of taking the accusations lightly, she said to him: 'If thou wouldst have me believe thee, come into the church with me on the morrow!' Then, since he could no longer dissemble, he told her the story of his adventure. At this she was at her wit's end, and ran to tell Saint Basil the mischance that had come upon her and her spouse.

Then the saint sent for the young man, made him confess all, and said to him: 'Dear son, dost thou wish to return to God?' And the youth replied: 'Ah, my father, I desire it with all my heart, but I cannot, for I have given myself to the Devil, and denied Christ, and have given the demon a screed wherein my denial was written with my own hand.' 'Be not troubled!' answered the saint. 'Jesus is merciful, and will accept thy repentance!' Then, drawing near the young man, he made the sign of the cross upon his forehead, and locked him in a cell; and three days later he came to see him there, and asked him how it went with him. 'Father,' the youth replied, 'it goes ill with me, for the devils, with my screed in hand, revile me day and night, saying: "Thou camest to seek us, and not we to seek thee!"' Then Saint Basil said to him: 'Fear naught, my

son, but have faith!' And he gave him a little food, and again made the sign of the cross upon him, shut him in again, and continued to pray for him. Returning some days later, he again asked how it went with him. The young man answered: 'Father, I still hear their cries and their reproaches, but I no longer see them!' And once more the saint gave him to eat, and made the sign of the cross upon him, shut him up, and prayed for him. On the fortieth day he asked him for the third time how it went with him. And the youth answered: 'All is well with me, my father, for today I have seen thee, in a dream, fighting for me and overcoming the Devil!'

Then Basil led him from his cell, committed him to the prayers of the clergy, the monks and the people, and taking him by the hand, brought him to the church. But Satan came running with a horde of demons; and still remaining invisible, they laid hold of the young man, and tried to tear him from the hands of the bishop. The youth cried out: 'Saint of God, help me!' And Satan himself, still invisible, cried out in a voice for all to hear: 'Basil, thou dost me wrong!' The people thereupon cried out: '*Kyrie, eleison!*' And Basil said: 'May God rebuke thee, thou wicked Devil!' To this the Devil rejoined: 'This man belongs to me. I did not seek him out. He came to me of his own will, gave himself to me, and renounced Christ. Here in my hand I hold the screed which he signed!' But Basil answered him: 'We shall not cease to pray, until thou surrender the writing to us!' And as Basil prayed, with his hands lifted to Heaven, a leaf of paper fluttered down through the air and fell into his hands, in the sight of all. And Basil showed it to the young man, and said: 'Brother, is this writing known to thee?' 'Yea verily it is!' he answered, 'since my own hand wrote it!' Then Basil tore the paper in pieces, brought the youth into the church, allowed him to take part in the holy mysteries, prescribed a rule of life for him, and restored him to his wife.

A certain woman had many sins on her conscience, and had drawn up a list of them. And when one day she committed a sin more grievous than the rest, she added it to the list, and then gave the list to Saint Basil, beseeching him to pray for her, that her sins might be forgiven. The saint prayed, and when the woman opened the paper, she saw that all her sins were erased, save only the gravest of them. Then she said to the saint: 'Have mercy on me, and obtain God's mercy for this sin, as thou hast done for the others!'



And Basil said to her: 'Go from me, woman, for alas, I am a sinful man, and have need of forgiveness no less than thou!' But the woman continued to importune him, and he said: 'Go to the holy hermit Ephrem. He will surely be able to obtain what thou askest.' And the woman went to the hermit Ephrem, and told him why Basil had sent her to him. But the hermit answered: 'Depart from me, my daughter, for I am a sinful man! Go back to Basil! He has obtained forgiveness for thine other sins, and he will obtain pardon for that one likewise! But make haste, or thou shalt not find him alive!' And at the moment when the woman was entering the city, the body of the saint was being carried to the cemetery. Then the woman cried out: 'Let God look upon us, and judge between thee and me, for thou hast sent me to a man who could do naught for me, whereas thou thyself hadst the power to win for me the forgiveness of Heaven!' Then she cast upon the coffin the paper whereon her sin was written; and when the paper was picked up, she saw that the last sin had been effaced like the others. And she, with all who stood by, gave thanks to God.

When he felt that he was about to die, Saint Basil summoned a learned Jewish physician named Joseph, whom he much loved, and whom he wished to convert to the faith of Christ. And when Joseph had felt his pulse, he knew that the hour of his death was close at hand. He therefore said to the bishop's servants: 'Make ready for his burial, for he will die at any moment!' But Basil overheard him, and said: 'Thou knowest not what thou sayest!' 'My lord,' said Joseph, 'I cannot be mistaken. As surely as the sun will set today, so surely wilt thy light be put out with it!' 'And what wilt thou say,' said Saint Basil, 'if I do not die today?' 'My lord, it is not possible!' 'But if nevertheless I live until the sixth hour tomorrow, what wilt thou do?' 'If thou art alive at that hour,' Joseph replied, 'I shall consent to die!' 'Consent only to die to sin,' said Saint Basil, 'and to live to Christ!' 'My lord,' answered Joseph, 'I understand thy meaning! And if thou livest until tomorrow at the sixth hour, I shall do as thou commandest me!' Then Saint Basil, who according to nature should have died that day, obtained of the Lord that he might live until the morrow. And Joseph, seeing that he did not die, was filled with wonderment, and believed in Christ. Whereupon Basil, finding in his soul the strength to overcome the weakness of his members, arose from his bed, went into

the church, and baptized Joseph with his own hands. Then he returned to his bed, and sweetly fell asleep in the Lord. This great saint flourished about the year 370.

## SAINTS VITUS AND MODESTUS

JUNE 15

Vitus comes from *vita*, life. However, in his book, the *City of God*, Saint Augustine points out that there are three kinds of life: an active life, a quiet life, which is the fruit of spiritual contemplation, and a life which is a mixture of both of these. So it was that Saint Vitus lived this threefold life. Or Vitus may come from *virtus* or *virtuosus*, and so he is called the virtuous one.

Modestus comes from *stans in medio*, he who stands in the middle, that is, in the midst of virtue. For two vices stand about each virtue, the virtue being the mean, the vices being the extremes. For the extremes of prudence are wiliness and stupidity; the extremes of temperance are the fulfilment of carnal desires and excessive self-affliction; the extremes of fortitude are weakness of will and rashness; the extremes of justice are cruelty and remissness.

The admirable child Vitus was only twelve years old when he suffered martyrdom, in Sicily. Even at home his father was wont to beat him because he treated the idols with contempt and would not adore them. When the prefect Valerianus heard of this, he summoned the boy, and when he refused to offer sacrifice, had him beaten with rods. But instantly the arms of those who struck him withered, as also the prefect's hand. And the prefect exclaimed: 'Woe is me, I have lost my right hand!' Then Vitus said to him: 'Pray thy gods, and let them heal thee if they can!' 'Dost thou pretend,' asked the prefect, 'to have the power to heal me?' 'Yes,' said Vitus, 'I have this power in the name of the Lord!' And at once, at the boy's prayer, the prefect and the executioners were cured. Thereupon the prefect said to Vitus' father: 'Take thy son hence, lest some evil death befall him!'

Then the father took him home, and tried to change his mind with music and the dances of girls and other pleasures. But one day when he had locked the child in his room, a wondrous perfume

issued therefrom and filled the entire house, much to the astonishment of the father; and he, looking into the chamber, saw seven angels ranged about his son. He cried out: 'The gods are come into my house!' And instantly he was stricken blind. At his cries the whole town of Lucania came running, and at their head Valerianus, who asked him what had chanced him. 'I have seen gods of fire,' he said, 'and my eyes could not bear the sight!' He was led by the hand to Jupiter's temple, and there promised to offer a bull with gilded horns if his sight were restored. When this promise proved unavailing, he implored his son to heal his eyes; and when the child prayed, his eyes were opened.

But when even this miracle left him unconvinced, and he thought to kill his son, an angel appeared to Modestus, the child's tutor, and directed him to take the boy aboard a small boat and bring him to another land. While they were at sea, an eagle brought them their food each day: and many were the miracles they wrought, in the divers lands where they came ashore.

Now the son of the Emperor Diocletian was possessed of a devil who declared that he would not leave him unless Vitus of Lucania came thither. Vitus was therefore sought and found, and Diocletian said to him: 'Dearly beloved child, hast thou soothly the power to heal my son?' 'I have not this power,' said Vitus, 'but my Master has.' And he laid his hands upon the tormented child, and the demon fled. Then Diocletian said to him: 'Child, pity thyself and sacrifice to the gods, else a dreadful death awaits thee!' But Vitus refused, and was cast into prison with Modestus. And then of a sudden their chains fell from them, and their cell was flooded with a blinding light. When the emperor learned of this, he had them thrown into a red hot oven, but they came forth unhurt. Then a ravening lion was loosed upon them, but the beast, overcome by the power of their faith, lay down at their feet. Finally Diocletian had the child stretched on the rack, and likewise his tutor Modestus and his nurse Crescentia, who had followed him constantly. But at that very moment the air was troubled, the earth shook, the thunder roared, and the temples of the idols collapsed, crushing a great number of their votaries. And the emperor fled in terror, beating himself with his fists, and crying: 'Woe is me, a child has vanquished me!' As for the three martyrs, they found themselves a moment later on the bank of a river, and there, after joining in prayer, they

died in the Lord. Eagles stood guard over their bodies until a matron named Florentia discovered them, and interred them with great honour. Their martyrdom occurred under Diocletian, who began to rule in the year of Our Lord 287.

## SAINT QUIRICUS AND HIS MOTHER SAINT JULITTA

JUNE 16

Quiricus comes from *quærens arcum*, one who seeks a bow; or it comes from *chisil*, strength, and *cus*, black, and means one who is strong in virtue and black through humility. Or it comes from *quiris*, spear; or from *quiriles*, a seat. For he was a bow, that is, bent in abasement of himself; strong in his suffering of martyrdom; black in his contempt of himself; a spear in casting down his enemies; a seat of God because God dwelt in him. For through grace everything was perfected in him beyond the capacity of his years.

Julitta comes from *juvans vita*, she who aids with her life; for she led a spiritual life and in this aided many.

Quiricus was the son of Julitta, a noble lady of Icona. In order to escape persecution, she took refuge at Tarsus in Cilicia, with her child who was then three years old. Julitta was led to the tribunal of the prefect Alexander; and her two serving wenches, seeing her a prisoner, took flight, so that she had to carry the little Quiricus, still wrapt in his swaddling-clothes. And when Julitta refused to worship the idols, the prefect took the child from her arms, and ordered her to be whipped with raw thongs. The child, at the sight of his mother's tortures, began to cry and to shed tears. In vain the prefect, holding him in his lap, tried to quiet him with kisses and caresses: the infant repulsed these blandishments with horror, coming as they did from his mother's tormentor, and scratched his face with his nails, crying as if he wished to say: 'I too am a Christian!' Enraged at this, Alexander hurled him from the tribunal, and his brains were spilt upon the steps. And Julitta, filled with joy, gave thanks to God that her son had gone before her into the heavenly realm. She herself was then flayed alive, plunged into boiling pitch, and at the last beheaded.

Another legend, however, relates that the child, at the time of his martyrdom, was not yet of an age to speak, and that the Holy Ghost spoke through his mouth when he said: 'I am a Christian!' At that moment the prefect is said to have asked him who had taught him to speak. And the child answered: 'Thy lack of wit is a wonder to me, that, seeing my age, thou askest who instructed me in the knowledge of God!' And during his martyrdom he went on repeating: 'I am a Christian!' And each time he repeated the words, they gave him new strength.

In order to prevent them from being buried by the Christians, the prefect ordered the martyrs' bodies to be cut piecemeal, and to be scattered to the wind. But an angel collected the members, and they were buried by the Christians under cover of the night. And when, under the rule of Constantine the Great, peace was restored to the Church, an aged serving woman, who had been a witness to the burial, made known the resting place of the two bodies, which thenceforward were worshipped piously by the whole city. The martyrdom of the mother and the child occurred about the year 230, in the reign of the Emperor Alexander.

## SAINT MARINA

JUNE 18

Marina was an only daughter. Her father, being widowed, entered a monastery; and then, putting his daughter in man's clothing, he asked the abbot and the other monks to receive his only son into the monastery. His request was granted, and the maiden was received among the monks, and bore the name of Brother Marinus. When she was twenty-seven years of age, her father, feeling the approach of death, called her to his bedside and told her never to reveal to anyone that she was a woman.

The maiden oftentimes went out to the fields with the plough and the oxen, or was appointed to bring back wood to the monastery; and at these times she found shelter in the house of a man whose daughter had been seduced by a soldier and was with child. When this girl was questioned, she declared that she had been ravished by Brother Marinus. And the brother in turn admitted his guilt, say-

ing: 'I am a sinner,' and was driven from the monastery. For years he stood at the door, with naught but crumbs of bread to sustain him. When the child whose father he was thought to be was weaned, it was committed to the abbot, who gave it into Marinus' care. And for two years he cared for it, bearing all this with great patience, and ever giving thanks to God.

Finally the monks were touched by his humility and his patience, and took him back into the monastery, appointing him to tasks which were too menial for themselves: and he accepted all with joy, and laboured patiently and piously. After a long life of good works, he breathed his last in the Lord. And when the brethren were washing the body, intending to bury it poorly, as befitted the corpse of a great sinner, they discovered that Brother Marinus was a woman. Filled with fear and wonderment, they avowed that they had been harsh and cruel to the handmaid of God, and all fell to their knees before her remains, entreating for pardon. The body was then buried with honour in the chapel of the monastery. And the wench who had accused her was possessed by the Devil, and confessed her crime; but when she was led to the virgin's tomb, she was made whole at once. And even today the people come from all sides to venerate this tomb, and many miracles are wrought there daily. The saint's death occurred on June 18.

## SAINTS GERVASIUS AND PROTASIUS

JUNE 19

Gervasius comes from *gerar*, sacred, and *vas*, vessel; or it comes from *gena*, pilgrimage, and *syor*, small. For he was holy in his meretricious life, a vessel containing all virtues, a pilgrim in his disdain for the world, small in his contempt of himself.

Protasius comes from *prothos*, the first, and *syos*, God or godly; or it comes from *procul*, distant, and *stasis*, stand. For he was first in dignity, godly in his love, and stood distant from all worldly temptation.

Saint Ambrose found a little book lying at their head which contained a description of their lives.

Gervasius and Protasius were twin brothers, the sons of Saint

Vitalis and the blessed Valeria. Having given all their goods to the poor, they lived with Saint Nazarius, who was building a retreat for himself near Embrun; and a child named Celsus carried stones for him. When the three saints were led away to the Emperor Nero, the little Celsus followed them, weeping aloud. And when one of the soldiers slapped the boy, Saint Nazarius upbraided him for his cruelty. Thereupon the angry soldiers felled the saint and trampled him, then locked him in a closet, and finally threw him into the sea. Gervasius and Protasius were brought to Milan, where Nazarius, who had been saved by a miracle, soon rejoined them.

At this same time Count Astasius came to Milan on his way to fight against the Marcomanni. The pagans gathered about him, declaring that their gods would not protect them as long as Gervasius and Protasius were not put to death. The two Christians were then ordered to sacrifice to the idols. And when Gervasius said that all the idols were deaf and dumb, Astasius was so angry that he had him beaten to death with leaded whips. Then he called Protasius and said to him: 'Wretch, wretch, beware lest thou die the same miserable death as thy brother!' 'Which of us is the wretch,' said Protasius, 'thou who fearest me or I that fear thee not?' 'Miserable man,' cried Astasius, 'how darest thou to say that I fear thee?' Protasius answered: 'Thou fearest lest I do thee harm, if I refuse to sacrifice to thy gods: didst thou not fear this, thou wouldst not seek to compel me to this sacrifice!' Then Astasius had him stretched on the rack. 'I bear thee no anger, count,' said Protasius, 'for I know that thou art blind in thy heart, but rather do I pity thee, for thou knowest not what thou dost. Cease not to torture me, that I may share with my brother the good countenance of our Master!' Then Astasius ordered him to be beheaded. And Philip, a servant of Christ, came in the night with his son: and they took away the bodies of the two martyrs, and buried them secretly in their house, in a marble tomb, placing beneath their heads a scroll in which was set down their birth, their life, and the circumstances of their death. The martyrdom took place in the reign of the Emperor Nero, who began to reign in 57.

The bodies of the two saints long lay hidden. They were unearthed in Saint Ambrose's time, in the following manner. One night Ambrose was in the church of Saints Nabor and Felix: and when, after long prayer, he fell into a half sleep, two comely youths,

robed in white, appeared and prayed with him, with arms outstretched. Ambrose then asked that if this were an illusion it might vanish, but if it were real it might again be made manifest to him. And at cockcrow the two young men appeared to him anew, and the following night they appeared a third time, in company with a third person, whom Ambrose recognized as the apostle Saint Paul from the pictures he had seen. And Saint Paul said to him: 'Here thou seest two brave youths who, disdaining the goods of earth, faithfully followed my teachings. Their bodies rest in this place. Twelve feet down in the earth thou shalt find a stone coffin containing their remains, together with a script wherein thou shalt read their names and an account of their end.' At once Ambrose called together the bishops of the region: then, opening the earth, he led the way into the pit, and found all things as Saint Paul had told him. And although more than three hundred years had passed since the death of the saints, their bodies were as scatheless as if they had been placed there the day before; and from them emanated a sweet perfume. And a blind man touched the coffin and recovered his sight; and many another sick person was cured by the intercession of the two saints.

It was on the anniversary of their feast that peace was pactured between the Longobards and the Roman Empire. In memory of this, Pope Gregory ordained that some reference to this happy event be included in the Introit of the Mass and in the office of their feast. Hence the Introit reads: *Loquetur Dominus pacem in plebem suam*, The Lord will speak peace unto His people and unto his saints, and unto them that are converted to the heart. Lord, thou hast blessed Thy land: thou hast turned away the captivity of Jacob.

In the twentieth book of the *City of God*, Saint Augustine relates that in his presence and that of the emperor a blind man recovered his sight at the tomb of Saints Gervasius and Protasius in Milan: we know not whether this be the same blind man of whom we have spoken earlier.

In the same book we read that a young man who was bathing his horse in a river near Hippo was attacked by a demon and thrown into the river half dead. But in the evening, when the Vespers were being chanted in the church of Saints Gervasius and Protasius close by, this young man came into the church with a great shrieking, and fixed his hold so tightly on the altar that no one could tear him



away. And when they conjured the demon to go out of him, he threatened to tear off the youth's limbs if they drove him out. And when at last he went out, one of the boy's eyes started from its socket, and hung by a vein. But a few days later, by the intercession of the two saints, he regained his wellbeing, and his eye, which had been pushed back haphazard into the socket, reopened to the light.

Ambrose writes, in his *Preface*, as follows: 'These are they who, armed with heavenly insignia, took up the victorious weapons of the apostles, free of all worldly attachments; they followed Christ, bravely attacking the ranks of the vices of the Devil. O happy brotherhood, which could not be spotted by earthly things, but lived in pious discourse. O glorious battle, in which those are crowned together, whom one maternal womb gave forth!'

## THE NATIVITY OF SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST

JUNE 24

John the Baptist is called by various names. He is called a prophet, a friend of the Bridegroom, a lamp, an angel, a voice, Elias, baptizer of the Saviour, herald of the Judge, precursor of the King. The title of prophet denotes his prerogative of knowledge; friend of the Bridegroom, his prerogative of love; lamp, his piety; angel, his virginal purity; voice, his particular humility; Elias, his ardent zeal; baptizer, the wondrous honour which was his; herald, his gift of preaching; precursor, his particular office of preparation.

The birth of Saint John the Baptist was announced by an archangel in the manner we shall now set forth. King David wished, as we read in the *Scholastic History*, to expand and embellish the divine worship; so he appointed four-and-twenty chief priests, of whom one was higher than the others, and bore the title of prince of the priests. Sixteen of them were to be of the family of Eleazar and eight of that of Ithamar. And the four-and-twenty chief priests carried out the functions of prince of the priests for a week, each in his turn. To execute this ministry in the eighth week, the lots designated the priest Abia, of whose family at a later time, came Zachary. Now Zachary and his wife were well advanced in years,

and had no children. And one day when he went into the Temple of the Lord to offer incense on the altar, and all the multitude of the people was praying without, there appeared to him the Archangel Gabriel. And Zachary, seeing him, was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the archangel said to him: 'Fear not, Zachary, for thy prayer is heard.'

We may point out in passing that, according to the *Gloss*, it is proper to the good angels to reassure by kindly words those whom their appearance frightens, whereas the demons who appear in the form of angels, as soon as they see that the one to whom they appear is affrighted, are wont to aggravate the fear which they inspire.

Gabriel therefore announced to Zachary that he would have a son whose name would be called John, who would drink no wine nor strong drink, and who would precede the Lord in the spirit and power of Elias. Here John is called Elias for he was like him in many things: in his manner of living, for they were both in the desert; in their food, for they both lived abstemiously; in their clothing, for they both wore poor garments; in their office, for they were both forerunners, as Elias was the forerunner of the Judge and John that of the Saviour; they were both equally zealous, for their words burned like flaming torches. And Zachary, giving thought to his advanced age and the barrenness of his wife, doubted the angel's words, and, after the manner of the Jews, demanded a sign as proof. Thereupon the angel, to punish him for having disbelieved his message, struck him dumb, thus giving him the sign he asked.

Here we should note that it is excusable if one doubts at times when the promise is unusually large, as we read of Abraham; for when the Lord promised him that his seed should possess the land of Canaan, Abraham said, 'Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall possess it?' And the Lord answered and said: 'Take me a cow of three years old, etc.' One may also doubt when aware of one's own weakness, as Gideon did when he said: 'I beseech thee, my lord, wherewith shall I deliver Israel? Behold my family is the meanest in Manasses, and I am the least in my father's house.' And therefore he asked for a sign and it was given unto him. One may also doubt the impossible in nature, as we see in the case of Sara. For when the Lord said: 'I will return and come to thee at this time, life accompanying, and Sara thy wife shall have a son,' Sara laughed behind the door of the tent and said: 'After I am grown

old and my lord is an old man, shall I give myself to pleasure?' How could it be then that Zachary was punished solely for his doubts, since all of these were present: the greatness of the promise, the awareness of his own weakness (for he thought himself unworthy of such a son), and the impossible in nature? We believe that this occurred for many reasons: first, as Bede writes, he who doubted with words was stricken dumb so that he might learn to believe in silence. Second, he was made dumb so that the miracle at the birth of his son might be the greater, for when John was born, his father's speech was restored, and so miracle was heaped upon miracle. Third, it was fitting that he should lose his voice, for the voice was to be born and with it the law of silence. Fourth, he himself asked the Lord for a sign, and received dumbness as a sign.

And when Zachary came out among the people, and could not speak to them, they understood that he had seen a vision in the Temple. Then, his week of service being finished, he departed to his own house, and Elizabeth conceived a child of him. For five months she hid herself, because, as Saint Ambrose says, she was ashamed of being with child in her old age, and feared that she might be suspected of abandoning herself to the pleasures of the flesh. Yet at the same time she rejoiced that the Lord had delivered her of the shame of barrenness, for it is a shame in women not to bear the fruit for which they were joined in wedlock, and which justifies carnal intercourse.

Elizabeth was six months pregnant when the Blessed Virgin Mary, who had already conceived the Saviour, came to salute her. And when she heard the salutation of Mary, Saint John, already filled with the Holy Ghost, and being aware of the approach of the Son of God, leaped for joy in his mother's womb, as though to greet by his movements Him Whom he could not yet greet by his words. Then the Blessed Virgin dwelt with her kinswoman for three months, caring for her in her waiting; and she it was who received the newborn child in her holy hands, and performed in his behalf the duties of midwife.

The holy precursor of Christ was endowed with nine singular privileges.

His birth was announced by the same angel who announced the birth of Christ.

He leaped in the womb of his mother.

He was lifted from the ground by the Mother of God.

At his birth he loosed his father's tongue.

He originated baptism.

He proclaimed the mission of Christ.

He baptized Christ.

He was honoured by being praised above all others by Christ.

He announced the coming of Christ to the souls in Limbo.

And by reason of these nine privileges the Lord declared him a prophet, and more than a prophet.

Explaining why he was 'more than a prophet,' Chrysostom says: 'It belongs to a prophet to receive the gift from God, but does it belong to a prophet to give to God the gift of baptism? A prophet prophesies about God, but does God prophesy about him? All the prophets foretold Christ, but of them nothing was foretold; but he not only prophesied about Christ, but the other prophets prophesied about him. All were bearers of the word, but he was the voice itself; as the voice is nearer to the word, and yet is not the word, so John was nearer to Christ, and yet was not Christ.'

John's praiseworthiness is understood from the sanctity of his life, whereof Chrysostom says: 'John's conduct made the life of all others to appear blameworthy. So, if thou seest a white garment, thou sayest: This is a very white garment! But if thou layest it upon the snow, it would appear to be soiled, although, in sooth, it is not soiled; so every man appeared unclean when compared to John.' Furthermore, his sanctity is proved by a threefold testimony. His first testimony comes from above the heavens, that is, from the Blessed Trinity itself. For the Father calls him an angel, and says of him: 'Behold I send my angel, and he shall prepare the way before my face.' But angel is the name of an office and not of a nature; and therefore he is called an angel by reason of his office, because he exercised the office of all the angels. First, of the Seraphim. Seraphim is interpreted fiery because the Seraphim set us afire, and they themselves burn more ardently with the love of God; and in Ecclesiasticus it is said of John: 'Elias the prophet stood up, as a fire, and his word burnt like a torch'; for he came in the spirit and power of Elias. Second, of the Cherubim. Cherubim is interpreted the fulness of knowledge; and John is called the morning star, because he put an end to the night of ignorance and made a

beginning to the light of grace. Third, of the Thrones, whose office is to judge; this John did when he challenged Herod, saying: 'It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.' Fourth, of the Dominations, who teach us to rule over subject; and John was loved by his subjects, and feared by kings. Fifth, of the Principalities, who teach us to revere superiors; and John said of himself: 'He that is of the earth, of the earth he is, and of the earth he speaketh,' and of Christ, 'He that cometh from Heaven is above all,' and also, 'But there shall come one mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to loose.' Sixth, of the Powers, by whom the harmful powers of the air are restrained. They could not harm him since he was already sanctified, but he shielded us from them when he disposed us to the baptism of penance. Seventh, of the Virtues, by whom miracles are done; and John manifested many miracles in himself. For it is a great miracle to eat wild honey and locusts, and to wear camel's-hair and such like. Eighth, of the Archangels, when he revealed greater things, such as those which regard our Redemption, as when he said: 'Behold the Lamb of God.' Ninth, of the Angels, when he announced lesser things, such as those which regard daily life, as when he said: 'Do penance,' and again, 'Do violence to no man; neither calumniate any man; and be content with your pay.'

He also had the testimony of the Son, as we read in Matthew, where Christ repeatedly and wondrously commends him, saying, among other things: 'There hath not risen among them that are born of women a greater than John the Baptist.'

He likewise had the testimony of the Holy Ghost, Who spoke through his father, saying: 'And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest.'

His second testimony came from the angels and the heavenly beings, as we read in Luke, where the angel many times praises him, showing how great is his dignity before God, when he says: 'He shall be great before the Lord'; how great his sanctity, when he says: 'He shall drink no wine nor strong drink, and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb'; how great his service to his neighbour, when he says: 'And he shall convert many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God.'

His third testimony came from those beneath the heavens, that

is, from men, as from his father and his neighbours; whence they said: 'What an one, think ye, shall this child be? For the hand of the Lord was with him.'

Let us recall that the birthday of Saint John the Baptist is likewise the day of the death of Saint John the Evangelist. But the Church has placed the feast of the Evangelist three days after Christmas, since it was on that day that the basilica erected in his honour was consecrated, whereas the feast of the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist is celebrated on the very day of his birth. We must not, however, conclude that the Evangelist is inferior to the Baptist, as the junior to the senior. And God has deigned to manifest openly that it is unseemly to try to determine which of these two saints is the greater. There were once two learned theologians, one of whom preferred Saint John the Baptist, the other Saint John the Evangelist; so that they came together one day for a formal disputation. And as both busied themselves seeking out authorities and arguments in support of their views, to each of them appeared the Saint John whom he favoured, and said to him: 'We are in excellent accord in Heaven; think not therefore to dispute over us on earth!' The two doctors made this known to each other and to the people, blessing God the while.

Paul, the historian of the Longobards, a deacon of the Church of Rome and a monk of Monte Cassino, was making ready one day to bless a candle, when all at once his voice, that had always been clear, became hoarse. And in order to recover his voice, he composed in honour of Saint John the hymn *Ut queant laxis resonare fibris, Mira gestorum famuli tuorum*, wherein he prayed God that his voice might return, as it had to Zachary of yore.

There are some who gather the bones of dead animals on this day and burn them. This is for two reasons, as we are told by Master John Beleth. First, because this is in keeping with an ancient custom. For there are animals which are called dragons; they fly in the air, and swim in the water, and crawl upon the earth. When they flew through the air they became impassioned and dropped their seed into the wells and the coursing waters, which brought about a year of plague. To combat this, it was found helpful to build a great fire of animal bones, the smoke of which drove off the dragons. And because this was done at the time of the feast of Saint John, there are many who still keep this custom. The other reason is

that in so doing, the burning of the bones of Saint John by the heretics is commemorated. Also on this day burning torches are carried because Saint John was a burning and illuminating torch. The wheel is also turned because the sun sinks in its course at that time; this denotes that the fame of John, who was taken for Christ, must also sink. He himself gives proof of this when he says: 'He must increase, but I must decrease.' This is also shown, according to the writing of Saint Augustine, in their birth and death. In their birth, for at the time of the birth of Saint John the days begin to grow shorter, whereas at the time of the birth of Christ, they grow longer; and it is written: *Solstitium decimo Christum præit atque Johannem*, which means, the solstice is ten days before the birth of Christ and Saint John. It was the same in their death; Christ's body was raised up on the Cross, the body of John was shortened by a head.

The same Paul relates, in his *History of the Longobards*, that one day a robber opened the tomb in which the Longobard king Rotharich had been interred by his own order, in the church of Saint John the Baptist. Thereupon Saint John appeared to him and said: 'Since thou hast dared to lay hands on these treasures which were under my care, thou canst no longer come into my church!' And thus it came about; for every time that this man sought to enter the church of Saint John, an unseen hand dealt him such a blow on the throat that he was forced to withdraw.

## SAINTS JOHN AND PAUL

JUNE 26

John and Paul were officers of Constantia, the daughter of the Emperor Constantine. When the Scythians occupied Thrace and Dacia, Gallicanus, the chief of the Roman army which was sent to withstand them, demanded that in return he should receive in marriage the daughter of Constantine; and the leading citizens of Rome supported his demands. But Constantine was distraught thereby, for he knew that after his daughter was cured by Saint Agnes, she had made a vow of virginity, and would die rather than break her vow. Constantia, however, trusting in the help of God, counselled

her father to consent to her marriage with Gallicanus whenever he should come back a conqueror, on the sole condition that he should leave with her the two daughters he had had of a former marriage, taking with him in exchange her two officers John and Paul. Thus it was agreed. But Gallicanus, setting out with a large army, was defeated by the Scythians and besieged in a city of Thrace. Then John and Paul came to him and said: 'Make a vow to the God of Heaven, and thou shalt have the victory!' And when Gallicanus had vowed to become a Christian, a youth appeared to him bearing the cross upon his shoulders, and said: 'Take up thy sword and follow me!' Gallicanus followed the angel, rushed into the enemy camp, forced his way to the king of the Scythians, slew him, threw the enemy host into panic, and forced it to surrender to Rome. And it is told that two knights in arms appeared to him, and remained at his side throughout the combat. He was then converted to Christianity; and, being received triumphantly in Rome, he besought Constantine to excuse him from marrying his daughter, since he had promised Christ to live thenceforth in continence. His two daughters had likewise been converted by Constantia, and were already pious Christians. And in a short time Gallicanus renounced his command, gave his goods to the poor, and began to serve God in poverty. And he wrought so many miracles that at the mere sight of him the demons fled out of the bodies of the possessed. Thus the fame of his holiness spread throughout the whole world, and from the East and the West they came to see this nobleman and former consul, washing the feet of the poor, pouring water for their hands, serving them at table, caring for the sick, and living as a true servant of God.

At Constantine's death the empire fell to his son Constans, who had lapsed into the Arian heresy. And as Constantine's brother had left two sons, Gallus and Julian, Constans promoted Gallus to the title of Cæsar, and sent him against the rebellious Jews; but later he put him to death. Then Julian fearing to suffer the same fate as his brother, entered a monastery, and by making great show of piety was ordained lector. And there he took counsel with the Devil, and learned that he would be made emperor. And after some time Constans, yielding to necessity, raised Julian to the title of Cæsar, and sent him to Gaul, where he displayed great bravery.

At the death of Constans, Julian, succeeding to the empire, or-



daind that Gallicanus should offer sacrifice to the gods, or depart from Rome: for he did not dare to put such a man to death. Gallicanus therefore went to Alexandria, where the unbelievers stabbed him to the heart, and thus conferred upon him the crown of martyrdom.

As for Julian, he invoked the Gospel itself to give a righteous seeming to the sacrilegious greed that possessed him. In the very act of despoiling the Christians, he said to them: 'Your Christ Himself says, in His Gospel, that anyone who does not renounce all that he possesses cannot be His disciple!' Thus when he learned that John and Paul were dispensing the wealth left to them by the pious Constantia in succouring the poor Christians, he summoned both of them and told them that they were to serve him as they had served Constantine. To this they responded: 'We served the glorious Emperor Constantine because he proclaimed himself a servant of Christ. But since thou hast abandoned holy religion, we have quit thy service, and we disdain to obey thee!' And Julian said to them: 'Know ye that I was a clerk in your Church, and, had I so wished, might have risen to the highest honours. But, bethinking me of the vanity of idleness, I devoted myself to the art of war; and having worshipped the gods, by them I was raised to the empire. And you, who are of courtly nurture, are bound to stay with me, and you shall be among my chief servants. But if it be true that ye despise me, I shall be forced to prevent you.' And the two saints answered: 'We put God above thee, and we fear not thy threats, but only to bring upon ourselves the wrath of almighty God!' Said Julian: 'If within ten days you do not come to me of your own free will, you will be compelled to do what you would not do freely!' 'Count the ten days passed,' they replied, 'and carry out thy threats today!' 'Think you,' said Julian, 'that you are to become martyrs in the eyes of the Christians? Know ye then that I shall not deal with you as martyrs, but as enemies of the republic!'

Then for ten days John and Paul redoubled their efforts, and distributed all the money that remained to them to the poor. On the tenth day, a certain Terentianus came to them and said: 'Our master Julian sends you this statuette of Jupiter, for that you may burn incense before it: else you shall both perish!' And the saints answered: 'If Julian be thy master, obey his orders; as for us, we have no master but Christ!' Then Terentianus beheaded them in

secret, and buried their bodies in their house; and he bruited it abroad that they had been sent into exile. But soon his son became possessed of a devil, who tormented him sorely. Seeing this, Terentianus avowed his crime, became a Christian, and wrote an account of the martyrdom of the two saints with his own hand; and in return his son was delivered from the Devil. The saints suffered martyrdom in the year 364.

Saint Gregory relates, in his homily on the text, *If any man will come after me*, that a woman who was wont to visit the church of the two martyrs, was returning one day from the church when she saw before her door two monks in the attire of pilgrims. At once she ordered her steward to give them alms. But they drew near to her and said: 'Since it pleases thee to visit us, we shall claim thee in the day of judgement, and shall do for thee all that is in our power!' And having said this, they vanished.

In his *Preface*, Ambrose says: 'The blessed martyrs John and Paul, have truly fulfilled that which David sings in the Psalms: "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" They were equal in birth, equal in faith, and equal in their martyrdom, and were always united in one glorious Master.'

## SAINT PETER

JUNE 29

Peter had three names. He was called Simon Bariona. Simon is translated as he who obeys, or he who mourns; Bariona, however, means son of the dove, for in Syrian *bar* means son, and in Hebrew *iona* means dove. He was obedient, for when Christ called him he answered the first call; he mourned, for when he denied Christ he went out and wept bitterly; He was the son of the dove, because he was diligent in serving God in simplicity. Again, he was called Cephas which means head, or rock, or one whose mouth resounds. He was a head in that he was the chief of the disciples, a rock in the constancy of his suffering, and one whose mouth resounds in his untiring preaching. Thirdly, he was called Peter, which means the knowing one, or one who takes off his shoes, or one who loosens. He knew the divinity of Christ when he said: 'Thou art Christ, the

Son of the living God.' He took off from the feet of his desires the works of death and all earthly things, when he said: 'Behold we have left all things, and have followed thee.' He loosens the fetters of our sins with the keys which he received from the Lord. Peter has also three surnames. He was called Simon Johanna, which means beauty of the Lord; Simon Johannis, which means he to whom it is given; and thirdly, Simon Bariona, the son of the dove. In this we should note that he had the adornment of good conduct, the gifts of virtue, and an overflowing of tears: for the dove does not sing but it mourns. The name of Peter was first given him by Jesus when He said: 'Thou shalt be called Cephas, which is interpreted Peter.' Thereafter He gave him the promised name, as we read in Saint Mark: 'And to Simon he gave the name of Peter.' For the third time He confirmed the name upon him when He said: 'Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church.'

His martyrdom has been written by Marcellus, Pope Linus, Hegesippus, and Pope Leo.

Saint Peter excelled all the other apostles in his faith. He it was who sought to learn the name of the one who would betray Jesus; and, as Saint Augustine says, he surely would have torn the traitor to pieces with his teeth had he but known who he was. That is why Jesus would not name him; for if He had made his name known, as Chrysostom says, Peter would straightway have arisen and slain him. He it was, likewise, who walked toward Jesus over the waters; who was chosen to be with Jesus at the Transfiguration, and at the raising of the daughter of Jairus; who found the coin of the tribute in the fish's mouth; who received from our Lord the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and was appointed to feed the lambs of Christ; who, on the day of Pentecost, converted three thousand men by his preaching; who laid the sentence of death upon Ananias and Sapphira; who healed Eneas, the man sick of the palsy; who baptized Cornelius, and raised Tabitha from the dead; who with the shadow of his body gave health to the sick; who was imprisoned by Herod and freed by an angel. What he ate and what he wore upon his body, he himself tells us in the book of Clement: 'I eat naught but bread and olives,' he says, 'and less often a few vegetables. For vesture I have but the tunic and mantle which thou seest upon me. And having all this, I desire nothing more.' It is also said that he carried ever in his bosom a towel wherewith to dry his tears, for

whenever he heard again in memory the sweet voice of his Master, he could not help but weep with tender emotion. He wept also at the memory of his denial: so much indeed did he weep therefor that, as Clement tells us, his face seemed to be inflamed with tears. Clement also says that when he heard the crowing of the cock in the night, he arose and prayed, and anew the tears began to course down his cheeks. And we also know from Clement that the day when Peter's wife was led to martyrdom, he called her by her name, and joyfully exclaimed: 'Dear wife, remember the Lord!'

One day Saint Peter sent two of his disciples forth to preach, and one of them died in the way, and the other returned to his master to make known to him what had happened. This latter, according to some, was Saint Martial; according to others, Saint Maternus; and others hold that he was Saint Front. The disciple who had died was the priest George. Then Peter gave his staff to the surviving disciple, and told him to go and lay it upon his companion's corpse. And no sooner had he done this than the dead man, who had already lain for forty days, came back to life.

In those days there dwelt in Jerusalem a sorcerer named Simon, who proclaimed himself the source of all truth, promised to make immortal all those who would believe in him, and said that nothing was impossible to him. And one time, as the book of Clement tells us, he said: 'I shall be adored publicly as a god, I shall receive divine honours, and all that I will to do I shall do. One day my mother Rachel sent me into the fields to reap, and I commanded a scythe to reap of itself; and reap it did, and its work was ten times that of the other workers.' And Jerome relates that he said: 'I am the Word of God, I am the Holy Spirit, I am God whole and entire.' He caused brazen serpents to creep upon the earth, and stone statues to laugh, and dogs to sing. Now this man desired to engage in discussion with Peter, and to prove to him that he was God. On the day agreed, Peter faced him, and said to those who stood by: 'Peace be with you, my brethren, who are lovers of the truth!' Then Simon said: 'We have no need of thy peace; for if we keep peace among us twain, we shall not strive to discover the truth. Thus thieves are at peace with each other. Call not therefore for peace, but for strife; and no peace shall there be, until one of us has defeated the other.' 'Why fearest thou to speak of peace?' said Peter. 'War is born only of sin, and where there is no sin, there

is peace. By discussion we learn the truth, and by good works we accomplish justice.' And Simon answered: 'Thy words avail naught. But I shall show thee the power of my godhead, so that thou shalt soon kneel down before me and adore me: for I am the highest power. I can fly through the air, create new trees, change stones into bread, walk through fire without suffering harm. All that I will to do, I can do.' But one by one Peter refuted his words, and exposed the deceits of his works. And Simon, perceiving that he could not withstand Peter, threw all his books of magic into the sea, lest he be denounced as a magician, and went off to Rome, hoping that there he might be adored as a god. And as soon as Peter knew this, he followed Simon to Rome.

He came to Rome in the fourth year of the reign of Claudius, and remained there for twenty-five years. He consecrated two bishops, Linus and Cletus, one for the outlying country, the other for the city itself. Tireless in preaching, he converted a goodly number of pagans to the faith, and cured many who were ailing. And as he never ceased to praise the virtue of chastity, the four concubines of the prefect Agrippa, who had been converted by him, refused to return to their master, so that he, in his wrath, sought an opportunity to perish the apostle. But Our Lord appeared to Peter and said to him: 'Simon the sorcerer and Nero have evil designs upon thee. But fear naught, for I am with thee: and for thy comfort I shall give thee the companionship of my servant Paul, who tomorrow will arrive in Rome.' Thereupon, as Linus has related, Peter understood that he was nearing the end of his rule over the Church. He therefore summoned an assembly of the faithful, took Clement by the hand, ordained him bishop, and seated him upon his own throne.

And on the morrow, as Our Lord had foretold, Paul came to Rome, and laboured with Peter in the preaching of the word.

Meanwhile Simon the magician had become so dear to Nero that, as was known to all, he held in his hands the fate of the whole city. One day, being in Nero's presence, he altered his countenance in such a way that at one moment he seemed an old man, and at the next a youth; and Nero, seeing this, believed that he was in sooth the Son of God. Another day the sorcerer said to the emperor: 'In order to be convinced that I am the Son of God, have me beheaded, and the third day I shall rise again!' Nero ordered the executioner to cut off his head: but Simon, by his magic art, caused the execu-

tioner to behead a ram, thinking the while that he was beheading Simon himself. Then the magician hid the ram's remains, left the bloodstains upon the pavement, and went into hiding for three days. The third day he made his appearance before Nero, and said to him: 'Let the marks of my blood be washed from the pavement, for behold I am risen from the dead, as I promised thee.' And Nero doubted of his divinity no longer. Thus writes Leo. Still another day, while Simon was with Nero in a room, a devil who had assumed his shape harangued the populace in the Forum. In the end he won such respect from the Romans that they raised a statue to him, with the inscription: 'To the holy god Simon.'

Now Leo tells us that Peter and Paul then made their way into Nero's presence, and unmasked all the sorcerer's arts. And Peter declared that as there were in Christ two substances, the divine and the human, so there were in Simon two substances, the human and the diabolical. Simon then exclaimed, as Leo and Marcellus tell us: 'I shall brook this opponent no longer! Now shall I order my angels to avenge me upon him!' 'I fear not thine angels,' said Peter; 'rather do they fear me!' 'Hast thou no fear of Simon,' asked Nero, 'even when his works show forth his godhead?' 'If godhead be in him,' answered Peter, 'let him tell what I am thinking and doing at this moment! And first I shall whisper my thought to thee, lest he make bold to lie!' Nero said to him: 'Come near, and tell me what thou art thinking!' And Peter whispered to him: 'Have a barley-loaf brought to me in secret.' He received the barley-loaf, and blessed it as he put it in his sleeve; and then he said: 'Let Simon now tell what I have said, thought, and done!' But Simon, rather than avow that he was defeated, said: 'Let Peter first tell what I myself am thinking!' And Peter answered: 'I shall show that I know his thoughts, by setting his scheme at naught!' Then, smitten with rage, Simon cried: 'Let huge dogs come and devour him!' And at once huge dogs appeared, and launched themselves upon the apostle: but he threw to them the loaf which he had blessed, and chased them away. And he said to Nero: 'Thus have I showed, not by words but by deeds, that I knew what Simon was devising against me.' And Simon said: 'Give ear to me, Peter and Paul! Here I can do nothing against you, and I spare you for this day; but we shall meet again, and then I shall judge you.' Thus writes Leo. But Hegesippus and Linus relate

that this same Simon, carried away with pride, dared to boast that he could raise the dead. And as a certain young man had just died, Peter and Simon were called, and upon Simon's demand it was determined that the one who could not revive the youth should be put to death. Then Simon, by his incantations, caused the dead man's head to move; and already the crowd clamoured that Peter should be stoned. But he, quelling their tumult with difficulty cried out: 'If the youth be really alive, let him get up, and walk, and speak; otherwise ye shall know that it is a demon that moves the dead man's head to and fro. But first let Simon be sent away from the bed, that the devil's tricks may be laid bare!' Simon was therefore placed at some distance from the bed, and at once the dead men ceased to move. But then Peter, likewise standing at a distance, and having prayed, said: 'Young man, in the name of Jesus Christ the Crucified, arise and walk!' And at once the dead man came to life, arose, and walked. Whereupon the crowd wished to stone Simon. But Peter said: 'He is punished enough, being forced to acknowledge the vanity of his witchcraft! And our Master teaches us to return good for evil!' Simon said: 'Peter and Paul, know ye that in spite of your desire, I will not consent to obtain for you the crown of martyrdom!' And Peter answered: 'Would that we might have our wish: but to thee may naught but ill befall, for all thy words are lies!'

Then Simon betook himself to the house of Marcellus, his disciple. He tied an enormous dog at the entrance, and then said to Marcellus: 'Now I shall see whether Peter, who is wont to visit thee, will be able to enter at thy door!' And when Peter came to Marcellus' house, with a sign of the cross, he freed the dog, who thereafter began to cuddle to everyone save Simon, whom he threw to the ground and started to maul. Indeed he would have strangled him, had not Peter come quickly and forbade him to do the sorcerer any ill. Thus the dog left Simon's body untouched, but tore his clothing to rags. And at this the populace, and especially the children, began to pursue the magician, and chased him from the city as they would a wolf. And thenceforth Simon, completely put to shame, durst not appear in public for a whole year, and his disciple Marcellus, convinced by these miracles, became Peter's disciple.

But later on Simon returned to Rome, and regained Nero's favour. One day he called the people together, and declared that because he was much offended by the Galileans, he was about to abandon the

city, which hitherto he had shielded by his presence, and that moreover he would ascend into Heaven, since the earth was no longer worthy to hold him. On the appointed day, therefore, he climbed to the top of a high tower, or, according to Linus, to the summit of the Capitoline hill; and thence he rose in flight, with a laurel crown upon his head. And Nero said to the two apostles: 'Simon says sooth! You are both impostors!' And Peter said to Paul: 'Lift up thy head and look!' Paul lifted his head, saw Simon flying about, and said to Peter: 'Peter, linger not to finish thy work, for already the Lord calls us!' Then Peter cried out: 'Angels of Satan, who hold this man up in the air, in the name of my Master Jesus Christ, I command you to hold him up no longer!' And straightway Simon was dashed to earth, his skull was split, and he died. This is related by Leo.

When all this was made known to Nero, he was sore afflicted at the loss of a man of this kind, and told the apostles that he would punish them therefor. He committed them to a high official named Paulinus, who cast them into prison, under the guard of two soldiers, Processus and Martinianus. But they were converted by Peter, and opened the prison, setting the two apostles free; for which act they were beheaded at Nero's command, after the death of Peter and Paul. But Peter, yielding at last to the entreaties of the brethren, decided to quit Rome. But when he came to one of the city gates, at the place where the church of Saint Mary ad Passus stands today, as Leo and Linus tell us, he came face to face with Christ Himself; and he said to Him: 'Lord, whither goest Thou?' And Our Lord responded: 'I go to Rome, to be crucified anew!' 'To be crucified anew?' asked Peter. 'Yes!' said Our Lord. And Peter said: 'Then, Lord, I too return to Rome, to be crucified with Thee!' Whereupon Our Lord ascended to Heaven, leaving Peter all in tears. Then, being aware that the hour of his martyrdom was at hand, he went back to Rome, where he was seized by Nero's ministers, and brought to the prefect Agrippa: and Linus relates that his face shone with joy. The prefect said to him: 'Art thou then the man who is pleased to dwell among the common folk, and who persuadest the women of the faubourgs to leave their husbands' beds?' Peter answered: 'Naught pleases me but the Cross of Christ!' Then, being an alien, he was condemned to die on the cross, whereas Paul, being a Roman citizen, was condemned to be beheaded.



In his letter to Timothy on the death of Saint Paul, Dionysius relates that the crowd of pagans and Jews did not weary of heaping blows on the two apostles and spitting in their faces. And when the moment of their separation came, Paul said to Peter: 'Peace be with thee, cornerstone of the Church, shepherd of the lambs of Christ!' And Peter said to Paul: 'Go in peace, preacher of truth and good, mediator of salvation to the just!' Thereafter Dionysius followed his master Paul, for the two apostles were put to death in different places. And when Peter came in sight of the cross, he said: 'My Master came down from Heaven to earth, and so was lifted up on the Cross. But I, whom He has deigned to call from earth to Heaven, wish to be crucified with my head toward the earth and my feet pointing to Heaven. Crucify me head downwards, for I am not worthy to die as my Master died.' And so it was done: the cross was turned, so that he was fixed to it head downwards. At this the crowd was enraged, and wished to kill Nero and the prefect, and deliver the apostle; but he besought them not to hinder his martyrdom. Then God opened the eyes of those who wept, and they saw angels standing with crowns of roses and lilies, and Peter standing in their midst, and receiving from Christ a book whose words he read aloud. For, as Hegesippus tells us, he began to speak from the cross: 'Lord, I have desired to follow Thee, but I did not wish to be crucified upright. Thou alone art erect, upright, and high. We are children of Adam, whose head was bowed to the ground: his fall denotes the manner in which men are born, for we are born in such wise that we are let fall prone upon the ground. And our being is so changed that the world thinks that left is right, and right is left. Lord, Thou art my all and other than Thee have I naught. I thank Thee with all my soul, with which I live, understand, and call to Thee.' In this speech we note two other reasons why Peter did not wish to be crucified in an upright position. And the apostle, being aware that the people saw his glory, commended them once more to God, and breathed his last. Then two brothers, Marcellus and Apuleius, his disciples, took him down from the cross, anointed him with sweet spices, and buried him.

Isidore says in his book, *Life and Death of the Saints*: 'After Peter had founded the Church of Antioch, he went to Rome under the Emperor Claudius, to oppose Simon the sorcerer, and there preached the Gospel for twenty-five years, and was bishop of that

city. In the thirty-sixth year after the Passion of Our Lord, he was crucified by Nero with his head to the ground, as he himself had desired.'

But on the same day Peter and Paul appeared to Dionysius, and he himself writes in the letter we have quoted above: 'But hear of the wonder, see the sign, dear brother Timothy, that occurred on the day of their martyrdom. In the hour when they parted from one another, I was still with them; but after their death, I saw them entering through the city gate hand in hand, dressed in shining garments, crowned with crowns of light and glory.'

But Nero did not go unpunished for this crime, and the others of which he was guilty, but died of his own hand. Some of these we shall now relate.

First, we read in an apocryphal history that when Seneca, who was Nero's teacher, held himself in readiness to receive the guerdon of his labours, Nero told him that for his reward he might have the right to choose the tree from which he would be hanged. And when Seneca asked how he had deserved to be condemned to death, Nero brandished a sword above his head, in such wise that Seneca closed his eyes and bowed his head in terror. And Nero said to him: 'Master, why bowest thou thy head before this glaive?' Seneca responded: 'Being a man, I fear death, and have no wish to die.' 'Ha, But I fear thee also!' cried Nero, 'and have feared thee since I was a child. I shall not rest easy whilst thou art alive!' Then Seneca said: 'If I must die, let me at least choose the manner of my dying!' 'Choose if thou wilt,' said Nero, 'save only that thou must die forthwith!' Whereupon Seneca opened his veins in his bath, and bled to death: and thus was the omen of his name fulfilled, for *se necans* means one who kills himself. And Seneca had two brothers, Julian Gallio the orator, who likewise took his own life, and Mela, the father of the poet Lucan, who also opened his veins at Nero's command.

Some time later Nero, captivated by the story of the burning of Troy, set fire to Rome, and the city burned for seven days and seven nights, while he, overlooking the fire from the summit of a tower, grandiosely recited verses from the *Iliad*. He fished with golden line, and boasted of singing better than any tragedian or lute player. But in the end the Romans, no longer able to bear with his madness,

threw themselves upon him and drove him out of the city. Then, seeing that he was lost, he sharpened the end of a stick with his teeth and drove it into his heart. Or else, as others say, he was devoured by wolves.

In the time of Pope Saint Cornelius, certain pious Greeks stole the bodies of the apostles, and sought to carry them off into their country. But the power of God compelled the demons who dwelt in the idols to cry out: 'Help, help, Romans, for your gods are being snatched away!' Thereupon the whole city set out in pursuit of the thieves, for the faithful perceived that this referred to the apostles, while the pagans thought that it meant their idols; so that the Greeks, terrified, cast the bodies of the apostles into a well near the catacombs, whence the faithful succeeded in drawing them out at a later time. Then there was doubt about which bones belonged to Saint Peter and which to Saint Paul, so all prayed and fasted, and a voice from Heaven responded: 'The larger bones are those of the preacher, and the smaller those of the fisher.' And the bones of the two saints drew apart of themselves, and those of each were carried to the church which was dedicated to him. Nevertheless some authors maintain that Pope Sylvester weighed the great and little bones, and divided them exactly in half, giving to each church half of the two bodies.

Saint Gregory relates in his *Dialogue* that nearby the church wherein repose the bones of Saint Peter there dwelt a holy man named Agontius. Now a young girl who was paralysed was wont to pass the day in this church: she crawled about on her hands, for her loins and feet were crippled. And after she had long besought Saint Peter to restore her to health, the saint appeared to her and said: 'Go to Agontius, who dwells hard by, and he will cure thee.' At once the maiden began to drag herself through the church buildings, hoping to discover the whereabouts of Agontius. But then he came to meet her, and she said to him: 'Our shepherd and foster father Saint Peter sends me to thee, that thou mayest make me well of my infirmity.' And Agontius replied: 'If in truth it be he who has sent thee, arise and walk!' Then he gave her his hand to aid her to rise, and at once she was cured, her paralysis disappearing completely.

Gregory also relates in the same book that there was once a young

Roman named Galla, the daughter of the consul and patrician Symmachus, who became a widow after a year of marriage. But whereas her age and fortune impelled her to marry again, she preferred to be united to God in spiritual espousals. And as her body was consumed with inward fire, the physicians said that if she continued to abstain from the embraces of men, this inward heat would cause a beard to grow on her face, contrary to nature. And in time this actually happened. But she had no fear of this outward disfigurement, knowing that it would not stay the love of her heavenly Spouse, if only she kept herself pure within. Leaving behind her the life of the world, she entered a convent which was attached to the church of Saint Peter, and there she long served God by prayer and almsworks. And finally she was found to be suffering with a cancer in the breast. At her bedside two torches always stood lighted, because she loved the light, and could suffer neither spiritual nor bodily darkness. And one day she saw the apostle Peter standing before her between the two torches. Then, filled with love and joy, she exclaimed: 'What, my master! Are my sins forgiven?' And he, smiling, answered: 'Yes! Come!' And she said: 'I ask only that Sister Benedicta come with me!' He replied: 'No, the other sister shall come with thee.' Galla recounted the matter to the abbess; and three days later, she and the said sister died together.

Saint Gregory further tells us that a very holy priest, being at the point of death, cried out: 'Welcome, my masters, welcome, my masters, who condescend to come to a wretched slave like me! I come! I come! Be thanked! Be thanked!' And when those who stood by asked him to whom he spoke in this manner, he replied: 'Do you not see the holy apostles Peter and Paul, standing there beside me?' And when he began anew to thank the apostles, his soul was freed of the bonds of the flesh.

Certain authors have raised a doubt that Peter and Paul were martyred the same day, and have maintained that they died a year apart. But Saint Jerome and all the saints who deal with this question agree in saying that the martyrdom of the saints occurred the same day and in the same year. Moreover, this is clear from the letter of Dionysius. The truth is simply that they were not executed at the same spot: and when Pope Leo says that both suffered in the same place, he means merely that both suffered at Rome. About this the following verses were written:

*Ense coronatur Paulus, cruce Petrus, eodem  
Sub duce, luce, loco, dux Nero, Roma locus*

and another wrote:

*Ense sacrat Paulum par lux, dux, urbs cruce Petrum.*

But although they died the same day and at the same hour, Saint Gregory ordained that their feasts be celebrated separately, and that the commemoration of Saint Paul take place on the morrow of the feast of Saint Peter. The latter saint indeed deserves to be honoured first, since he was both higher in dignity and earlier converted. Moreover, his title of sovereign pontiff gives him a definite right to this primacy.

## SAINT PAUL

JUNE 30

Paul is translated trumpet's mouth, or a mouth of men, or the one wondrously chosen, or the wonder of choice; or Paul comes from *pausa*, rest; or it means small. These interpretations denote six especial gifts which Saint Paul possessed above all the other apostles. First, his fruitful preaching, when he spread the Gospel from Illyria to Jerusalem, and that is why he is called the trumpet's mouth. Second, his great charity, for he said: 'Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is scandalized, and I am not on fire?' And that is why he is called a mouth of men, that is, of men's hearts. He himself has said: 'Our mouth is open to you, O ye Corinthians, our heart is enlarged.' Third, his miraculous conversation, and that is why he is called wondrously chosen. Fourth, his active hands are the reason why he is called the wonder of choice, for it was a great wonder that he chose to earn his bread with his hands and nonetheless to preach without ceasing. Fifth, his contemplation, for he was rapt to the third heaven; that is why he is called the rest of the Lord, for in contemplation there is rest. Sixth, his great humility, and that is why he is called small.

There are three opinions as to the name of Paul. Origen believes that he always had two names and was called Saul and Paul. Rabanus says that he was first called Saulus after the proud King Saul, but that after his conversion he was called Paul, meaning the small one, because of his great humility. Of this he himself said: 'For I

am the least of the apostles.' Bede, however, is of opinion that he took the name of Paul from the proconsul Sergius Paulus whom he converted. The passion of Saint Paul was written by Pope Linus.

Following his conversion, Paul the Apostle was made to undergo many persecutions, which Saint Hilary states briefly in these words: 'At Philippi he was beaten with rods, imprisoned, and tied by the feet to a wooden bar; at Lystra he was stoned; at Icona and Thessalonica, falsely accused; at Ephesus, thrown to the beasts; at Damascus, cast from the top of a tower; at Jerusalem, arrested, beaten, bound, assaulted; at Cæsarea, put in gaol; during his voyage to Italy, exposed to storms; and finally, at Rome, under Nero, judged and put to death, and so his life ended.'

We should add that at Lystra he cured a paralytic, restored to life a young man who had fallen from a window, and wrought many another miracle. At Mitylene a viper bit him in the hand without doing him any harm; and it is said that all the descendants of the man who was his host are immune from the poison of serpents, so that when a child is born of this race, serpents are placed in its crib, to prove whether it be indeed the son of its father. And Haymon tells that Paul laboured with his hands from cockcrow to the fifth hour, then engaged in preaching well into the night, and deemed that the few hours remaining to him were quite sufficient for his eating, his rest, and his prayers. When he came to Rome, Nero, who was not yet confirmed in the imperial office, learned that the Jews sought to dispute with Paul, and to set their faith against the Christian faith; but he gave no heed to this, and left Paul free to go about as he wished. Saint Jerome states that in the twenty-fifth year after the Passion of Our Lord, and the second year of Nero's reign, Paul came a prisoner to Rome, but remained at liberty for two years, and then was released by the emperor and went to preach in the West, finally being beheaded the same day that Peter was crucified, in the fourteenth year of the reign of Nero.

His learning and his piety were so inspiring that he even had as disciples and friends several members of Nero's household, and some of his writings were read in Nero's presence. One evening when he was preaching, a youth named Patroclus, who was much beloved of Nero, climbed upon a windowsill to hear him the better; and he fell from the window and was killed. When knowledge of this

came to Nero, he was aggrieved at the young man's death, and chose another to take his place. But Paul had the body of Patroclus brought to him, raised him to life, and sent him back to Nero with his comrades. And Nero, affrighted at the appearance of the man whom he knew to be dead, refused at first to receive him. Then, when he had admitted him, he said: 'Patroclus, art thou alive?' 'Yes, Cæsar!' 'Who then restored thee to life?' 'Jesus Christ, the King of ages!' Then, in a rage, Nero cried: 'And so it is this king that thou servest!' And he answered: 'May I indeed serve Him who brought me back from the dead!' At that very moment five others among the emperor's familiars, being present, said: 'Why art thou angered, Cæsar, at a youth who tells thee the truth? Know that we too are soldiers of this invincible King!' Hearing this, Nero had them all imprisoned, despite his affection for them. Then he caused all Christians to be sought out, and condemned them without hearing to the most dreadful tortures. And when Paul came before him in chains, he said to him: 'Thou who art the servant of a great king, and yet my prisoner, why turnest thou my officers from their duty?' And Paul replied: 'Not only in thy court do I gather my soldiers, but in the whole world. And if thou thyself art willing to submit to our law, thou shalt be saved! This King is so mighty that He will come to judge all men, and will destroy the world by fire!' Nero was so wroth at these words that he had all the Christians save Paul burned alive: and he condemned the apostle to be beheaded for the crime of treason. And so great was the slaughter of the Christians that the people of Rome broke into the palace and threatened revolt, saying: 'Cæsar, put an end to the massacre, for the men whom thou sendest to death are our kinsmen, and the staunchest supports of the empire!' At this the emperor took fright, revoked his edict, and proclaimed that he alone would be the judge of the Christians.

Thus Paul was brought before Nero a second time. And Nero was again stirred to wrath at the sight of him, and cried: 'Take this criminal away and behead him!' And Paul said: 'Nero, my suffering will endure but an instant, and then I shall live for all eternity with my Master, Jesus!' 'Cut off his head,' cried Nero, 'and let him know that I am stronger than his Master! And then we shall see if he lives thereafter!' And Paul responded: 'That you may know that I am still alive after the death of my body, I shall appear

living before thee after they have cut off my head!' Then he allowed himself to be led to the place of execution.

On the way, the three soldiers who led him asked: 'Who is this King whom thou so lovest, and what reward awaitest thou of Him?' Paul discoursed so well to them about the Kingdom of Heaven that he converted them. They besought him to flee. And he replied: 'No, my brothers, I am not one to flee, but a soldier of Christ. When I am dead, the faithful will come and bear away my body, to carry it to a certain place. And come ye thither tomorrow morning. There you will find two men in prayer, named Titus and Luke. Tell them wherefore I have sent you to them. They will baptize you, and you will be admitted to the Kingdom of Heaven!' Then two other soldiers came up, having been sent by Nero to see whether his sentence had been carried out. And when he sought to convert them likewise, they said: 'If thou returnest to life after thy death, we shall believe in thy words; but now make haste, and receive the punishment that is due thee!' A little farther on, at the Ostia gate, he met a Christian woman of the name of Plautilla, who was also called Lemobia, and this woman entreated him with copious tears to pray for her. And Paul said to her: 'Plautilla, my dear daughter, lend me the veil with which thy head is covered. I shall cover my eyes therewith, and then thou shalt take it back.' And the executioners mocked her, and said: 'How canst thou give this precious object to such an impostor?'

When he arrived at the place of execution, Paul turned to the East, raised his eyes to Heaven, and prayed for a long time. Then, having said his farewells to his brethren, he tied Plautilla's veil about his eyes, knelt, offered his neck to the knife, and was beheaded. And when his head was already severed from his body, his mouth pronounced in Hebrew the name of Jesus, which in life it had so often repeated, with so much sweetness. From the wound came forth first a spurt of milk, which fell upon a soldier's mantle. Then the blood flowed, and a most sweet perfume emanated from his body. And when all these miracles were made known to Nero, he was sore affrighted, and locked himself in his apartment with his inmates. And of a sudden, all the doors being closed, Paul entered and said to him: 'Cæsar, behold me, the soldier of the eternal and invincible King! And thou, wretched man, shalt die the everlasting death, for having unjustly put to death the servants of this King!' With



these words he disappeared. Beside himself with terror, Nero no longer knew what he was doing: and upon the counsel of his friends he freed Patroclus, Barnabas, and the other Christians.

Meanwhile the soldiers who had led Paul to execution came on the morrow to the tomb of the martyr. There they found Titus and Luke in prayer, and Paul standing between them. At the sight of the soldiers Titus and Luke took flight, and Paul disappeared. But the soldiers called after the two disciples: 'We come not to persecute you, but to be baptized by you, as Paul, who but a moment ago stood by you, has commanded us!' At these words the disciples retraced their steps, and baptized the soldiers with great joy.

Paul's head was thrown into a ditch with a great many others, so that it was impossible to find it. But one day, as the ditch was being emptied, a shepherd picked up a skull on the end of his staff, and put it in his stable. And for three nights the shepherd and his master saw an unearthly light shining above the skull. Hearing of this, the bishop and the faithful knew that this must be Saint Paul's skull. It was therefore borne away with great solemnity, and they were about to place it above the body, when the patriarch said: 'So many holy martyrs have had their heads thrown pellmell into that ditch, that we cannot be sure that this is indeed the head of Saint Paul. Let us therefore put it at his feet; and if it be truly his, let the trunk turn about, so that it will be upon the shoulders!' So it was done, and to the astonishment of all, the body turned in the coffin. And all, praising God, acknowledged that it was surely Paul's head. This at least is what we read in the letter of Saint Dionysius to Timothy.

Gregory of Tours declares that Saint Paul's chains work many miracles. When the faithful desire a few filings from these chains, a priest rubs them with a file; and sometimes the filings drop at once, while at other times, long and hard as the priest may file, not a grain falls from the chains.

We read in the same Gregory of Tours that a certain man, yielding to despair, was preparing a noose wherewith to hang himself, and yet repeated over and over: 'Saint Paul, help me!' Then there appeared to him an ill-boding shade, that said to him: 'Ha, my friend! Be quick to finish what thou art about!' But he, continuing to make ready the noose, still repeated: 'Saint Paul, help me!' And when he had completed the noose, another shade appeared, and

addressed the one that had exhorted the man to kill himself, saying: 'Begone, wretch, for behold, Saint Paul is come!' At once the ominous shade vanished, and the man, coming back to his senses, threw away his noose and did penance.

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